

**Teach, Coach, Live: The Viability of the Three-Role Teaching Model in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century**

A Dissertation

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by

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of

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This Ed.D. Dissertation Committee from The School of Education at Drexel University  
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Teach, Coach, Live: The Viability of the Three-Role Teaching Model in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife Glynis for her constant support throughout my work on this endeavor. Your love, enthusiasm, patience, reassurance, and support made this work possible. I also dedicate this dissertation to my late father, the Rev. Dr. Wesley Martin. Even though he was unable to be part of my doctoral work, his influence and belief in academia was a constant presence.

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## **Abstract**

Teach, Coach, Live: The Viability of the Three-Role Teaching Model in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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This explanatory mixed-methods study is focused on the sustainability of the triple-threat model of teaching found at elite American boarding schools. In this model, faculty members are expected to teach, coach, and perform residential duties as part of their contract. While elite boarding schools have been researched in recent years, no research exists on the teachers at these institutions or the hiring model used to staff them. In recent years, a great deal of discussion has come to the fore within elite boarding schools concerning the future of the triple-threat model. With cultural and economic changes impacting elite boarding schools, the long-standing staffing model is being pressured from both internal and external forces. These pressures bring the future of the triple-threat model into question. Viewed through a grounded theory approach, the researcher is using collected data to determine if the triple-threat is indeed under pressure and if so, whether this model is sustainable given these pressures. Surveys given to heads of 28 schools identified as elite were combined with interviews with heads of these schools to construct a review of the triple-threat model and its place in these elite schools in the years to come. Results of this study can be applied to hiring practices in both elite and non-elite schools to create a staffing model that is both good for the students and sustainable for the school.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

### **Introduction to The Problem**

According to the 2011-2012 NCES study put forth by the Department of Education, there are roughly 78,000 students and 11,000 teaching faculty spread out among 238 boarding schools in the United States, with 28 of those defined as “elite” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). These schools are members of The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS). Both groups act as professional organizations for independent schools and hold annual conferences, workshops, symposiums, and hiring fairs. However, membership in these organizations does not dictate how schools operate aside from accepted “best practices” to which schools generally adhere.

Independent boarding schools are governed by self-perpetuating boards who appoint heads of schools and are designated as 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. Independent schools are free to create educational programs and curriculum as they see fit and that align with the school’s individual mission statement. They are free from participating in state testing, can hire faculty members based on internal criteria regardless of certification or teacher education backgrounds, admit students appropriate to the culture and mission of the school, and dismiss faculty and students for not meeting the standards of the school or violating policies as set forth in the respective faculty/student handbooks. Much like private liberal arts colleges, American boarding schools vary in size, mission statement, focus, academic rigor, and wealth. With a

variety of levels among the 238 TABS members, comparing programs across the entirety of schools is illogical. As a result, this study focused on elite schools only.

Elite boarding schools have long been present in American education since the founding of Phillips Academy (Andover) in 1789. Based on the Puritan's history and experience with Oxford and Cambridge Universities, these elite schools were modeled on the British system and focused on educating the elite members of colonial society in a traditional liberal arts manner (Cookson & Persell, 1985). With the number of schools in the United States expanding between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as the economy and prestige of the nation grew, elite boarding schools, concentrated in the Northeast, preceded public education and became the educational choice for young men and women of means.

Popular mythology regarding elite boarding schools paints a picture of white, upper-class institutions that cater to the top segment of society as seen in *The Dead Poet's Society*, *School Ties*, or *Catcher in the Rye*, or as described by Khan (2012) in his book *The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*. Mills's *The Power Elite* (1956) reinforced this concept as one of maintaining and promoting class hierarchy in the United States in which elite institutions reinforced power and prestige through the exclusivity of elite boarding schools. These views and practices began to change significantly in the 1990s due to cultural changes, both economic and social, pushing schools to become more diverse. Several elite schools have moved towards "need blind" admissions practices in the same way elite colleges have. The most recent data put forth by the National Association of Independent School (NAIS, 2014) indicate between 12% and 25% minority representation in independent schools with between 20% and 50% of

students receiving financial aid. In recent years, the growth of international populations at elite schools has significantly impacted the culture found at these schools with greater emphasis on global viewpoints and cultural competency. While still elite, the notion of being exclusive has waned.

### **Defining the Elite Boarding School**

According to Gaztambide-Fernández (2006), 28 schools have been identified as “elite” based upon five criteria: (a) typologically elite, (b) scholastically elite, (c) historically elite, (d) geographically elite, and (e) demographically elite. In addition to these types of schools, others of varying size, mission statement, endowment, and academic rigor populate the Nation, with the greatest concentration being found in the Northeast. Baltzell’s (1958) initial list contained 16 schools, known as the “select 16” (p. 306), and Ruben Gaztambide-Fernández expanded this list to 28 in 2006.

With further study on the subject, Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) refined the criteria to define elite boarding schools based on the following metrics: (a) schools located in New England, (b) schools founded before 1900, (c) schools with a selectivity index of at least 35%, (d) schools with at least \$100 million in endowment or with a combined wealth of at least \$150 million based on endowment and physical plant value, and (e) schools where the average combined (all three sections) SAT scores for the class of 2007 was at least 1800, and where at least three of the college programs admitting the most students ranked “most selective” in Petersons Guide or are schools contained in the *Wall Street Journal* list of schools with the best college placement success rate. To be deemed “elite,” schools needed to meet three of the five standards. This list of schools contains single-sex and coeducational institutions, religious and non-denominational, and

student bodies from under 300 to over 1,000. In creating a list defined by specific criteria yet not narrowly focused on what particular schools are like, Gaztambide-Fernández offers a true cross-section of elite boarding schools in the United States that serves as an accurate representation of the elite school.

### **The Triple-Threat Model**

As residential institutions, elite boarding schools rely on a model of staffing particular to the needs of these unique educational entities. With classes needing to be taught, athletic teams coached, drama productions directed, and dormitories overseen, elite boarding schools have long relied on single “masters” or “matrons” to perform these duties. These educators would live alongside students and very much commit themselves to the school. These “silent partners” (Cookson & Persell, 1985, p. 85) were integral parts in the success of the school as they filled multiple duties during long hours and earnings not much above the minimum wage when applying per hour rate. Teachers are expected to see the job as a “way of life” (Cookson & Persell, 1985, p. 85) and not simply a paycheck. Interactions with students in elite boarding schools are constant. The school day does not end until late at night and weekend events and offerings are the norm.

With most single-sex schools shifting to coeducation in the 1970s (Cookson & Persell, 1985), faculty populations expanded away from the unmarried scholar serving a school for decades to families living on campus, often with both husband and wife employed. Although this term was present internally in schools much longer, it was not until Cookson and Persell (1985) that the term “triple-threat” entered academic literature. These educators both teach and coach and serve as residential advisors or dorm parents.

While a small percentage of the total number of teachers in the United States can be attributed to elite boarding schools, the aggregate numbers are large enough to deserve the attention of academic researchers, especially given the influence alums these schools have in government and business (Carney, 2012; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2009; Maloberti, 2010).

While outliers do exist, in the typical boarding school model, faculty members are expected to: (a) teach four to five classes six days per week, (b) coach or lead an activity two out of three athletic seasons (fall, winter, spring), and (c) play an active role in the residential life program of the school by doing weeknight and weekend duty that includes supervising study hall, overseeing form jobs, providing academic extra-help, defining form culture, and remaining through “lights-out.”

Faculty members who reside in housing attached to the dorm are referred to as “dorm parents” and are responsible for room inspections, dorm meetings, and addressing any discipline or social issues that arise within their respective dorm. Faculty members residing out of dorm housing are expected to perform duties similar to those of resident dorm parents with the exception of overnight supervision (see Table 1). Teachers are expected to perform at high levels in all three areas of school life, and workweeks of up to 100 hours are the norm. This anecdotal information has been substantiated through multiple conversations with recruiting agencies, heads of school, and faculty members at elite boarding schools and the personal experience of the researcher.

Table 1

*Triple Threat Roles*

| Role                  |  | Duties   |  |   |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Teacher               | 4 or 5 sections of classes averaging 10-15 students  | Between 5 and 10 advisees with both formal and informal meetings during the week     | 2-3 preparations in a content area   | Narrative comments for all students and advisees between 2 and 5 times per year   |
| Coach/Activity Leader | Two seasons commitment to an afterschool activity  | Can be arts, theater, club, or athletics   | Usually head one season and assist another   | 10 or more students involved, with greater student numbers adding additional adult leaders  |
| Dorm Parent           | Either “in dorm” or “out of dorm”. Defined as living in the dorm or coming in to perform duty from outside of the dorm | 1-2 nights per week running study hall, check-in, and lights-out. Usually until 11pm | Head dorm parent is supported by others from within the dorm and those living off-campus or in other school housing. | Includes weekend duty every 4-6 weeks. Duty from the end of classes (Friday or Saturday) through Sunday night. Includes chaperoning trips and supervision on campus |



Faculty directories that contain educational backgrounds and biographical information on teachers can be found on the website of every elite school. This practice, as well as statements in school publications promoting the achievements, importance, and credentials of teachers, is the norm. Daniel Roach, Headmaster at Saint Andrew's School in Middletown Delaware stated, "We (faculty) pour hours of time, energy and attention each year into our work as teachers, advisors, coaches, dorm parents, directors and mentors- we feel a passionate commitment to the development and welfare of our students" (2009, p. 3). It is this belief of "in loco parentis" (in the place of the parent) that defines the role of the triple-threat teacher.

Common to all boarding schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985; TABS, 2013), many of the faculty members are graduates of private liberal arts colleges, with elite boarding schools possessing a large number of faculty members with degrees earned from schools ranked in the top 50 by *U.S. News and World Report*. As an example, the most commonly held degree in the history department at The Hotchkiss School in Connecticut is from Harvard (The Hotchkiss School, 2014). Other elite schools share this type of profile with regard to the educational background of faculty members. In addition, many faculty members possess impressive arts and athletics backgrounds including Broadway performances, service awards, and Olympic appearances.

These educators fall outside the accepted public view of teachers, as most do not have formal teacher training or certification of any type. Consequently, most boarding school teachers would not be considered as "qualified" or "HQT" if measured by current state and national standards (NCLB). The perceived value added of a boarding school education and the results of such an education based on SAT scores and college

matriculation would support the assertion that these schools are successful in meeting the needs of students and their families (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). In addition, the willingness of families to pay a high tuition supports the view that an education at an elite boarding school is a worthwhile investment.

Boarding school teachers have contact with students in multiple venues, from teaching them in the classroom, to coaching them on the playing field, to directing them in the theater, to monitoring them in the dorm. The impact of triple-threat teachers based on contact hours is significant, and these teachers truly take on the role of “in Loco Parentis.” The expectations placed upon triple-threat teachers are high, since it is understood they must possess multiple areas of expertise and are responsible for educating students in a 24/7 environment both in and out of traditional classroom settings. In addition, the cost of a boarding school education demands that teachers produce results when working with students if schools are to continue to justify the tuition that families pay, currently around \$50K per year, according to both the NAIS (2014) and TABS (2015).

Found on many school websites, search agency pages, and in literature from TABS, the significance of faculty members is a common theme. In addition, most webpages of elite schools contain an employment segment that describes the culture and expectation of working in such a school. As stated on Groton Academy’s webpage,

If you are applying to become a member of Groton’s faculty, you should understand that Groton believes it is essential that teachers take part in students’ lives. Groton’s faculty does what the best faculties do: it builds student-teacher relationships that reach beyond the classroom and affirm and nurture the spirit while challenging the mind. Faculty members are expected to fulfill the founding vision that Groton teachers take up the teaching profession as “their life’s work.” (para. 3)

According to TABS (n.d.), “90% of boarding school students report having high-quality teachers compared to 62% of private day and 51% of public school” (para. 1). As a result of the demands of parents, cost of an elite boarding school education, and a perception that students are receiving a high-level education, teachers in boarding schools must excel at working with young people in a variety of capacities regardless of their pedagogical or content area expertise. Recruiting teachers for positions in boarding schools is a challenging endeavor, especially given that the demands of the job and performance expectations are high, the workweek long, and the salary lower than that of public schools (J. Chubb, personal communication, April 26, 2014).

### **Hiring for the Triple Threat**

Most elite boarding schools follow similar protocols; however, hiring for the triple threat can vary somewhat from school to school. Many schools choose to utilize search agencies such as Carney-Sandoe, CalWest, or The Southern Teachers Agency to construct an initial pool of candidates. Balancing a school’s faculty with regard to level of education, time at a particular school, years teaching, extracurricular expertise, and marital/parenting status is a significant challenge all schools face. Schools hire new teachers out of college, veteran teachers, and teaching couples depending on the needs the school may have for a given year. Heads of schools work together with an administrative team consisting loosely of a Dean of Academics, a Dean of Faculty, a Dean of Athletics, and a Dean of Residential Life. Balancing the faculty between a mix of veteran teachers, middle career teachers, and new educators fresh out of college is essential to meeting the demands of the triple threat. Younger faculty provide energy and cost effectiveness with regard to salary and housing needs. Mid-career educators give

stability to schools since they tend to move less frequently (K. Hicks, personal communication, May 23, 2015) and often add a “family feel” to the campus. Veteran teachers provide institutional knowledge and act as “elder statesmen” in defining faculty culture.

Job openings for teaching positions may be advertised on the website of individual schools or on the NAIS job board. Hiring needs are usually advertised in the late winter and early spring in a general format since the specific needs of schools are not known until contracts are issued to returning faculty members before the traditional March break. Once contracts are received from returning faculty members in March after spring break, a hiring matrix is created to fill any potential programmatic vacancies caused by faculty attrition.

The attrition rate among faculty members at boarding schools sits at roughly 7% nationally (NAIS, 2014). As the hiring matrix in boarding schools is shifting and complex, given the athletic, dorm, and housing needs that exist, specific needs of schools are not disclosed publicly. As a result, what produces an offer to a teaching candidate is often a mix of what the candidate brings to the table in all three areas of school life and what the school sees as a good fit. In an example scenario, a particular school may need an AP science teacher, a crew coach, an English teacher who is replacing a long-standing teacher, a dorm parent to fill an efficiency apartment in a girl’s dorm, or any combination of like scenarios.

The hiring process in boarding schools is generally completed by June, as newly hired faculty members move to campus over the summer for orientation and need time to prepare. As stated by Sharkey and Goldhaber (2008), the flexibility private schools have

with regard to hiring can be viewed as an advantage since it allows the administration license to hire who they see as the best fit for a given position as opposed to the more narrowly defined conditions public school administrators must work within. While much literature exists on hiring practices in public schools (Cranston, 2012; Donaldson, 2013; Engel, 2012, 2013; Mertz, 2010; Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010), there is no mention in academic literature of the practices and protocols with regard to hiring in boarding schools.

Scholarly research into elite boarding schools has centered on defining what an “elite” boarding school is (Baltzell, 1958; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006, 2009; Graham, 2012; Jenkins, 2011; MacFadden, 2008), describing the minority experience at these schools (Carney, 2012; Malobertti, 2010; Sgro, 2006), highlighting international students at these schools (Hawkey, 1997; Katz, 2008), or the impact of these schools on first-year college students (Barlow, 2002). The triple-threat model has been the historic norm in boarding schools since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the dearth of research about the triple-threat model in general, and the sustainability of that model specifically, signifies a substantial gap in academic research. Learning outcomes and achievement for students at boarding schools, with some having average SAT scores as high as 2100 (Phillips Exeter Academy), have been perceived by some to be a product of the selective nature of the schools themselves.

Given the selectivity in student admissions, hiring methods of the elite boarding school must be sufficient to staff the school with scholars who have the academic background and cognitive ability to support high-achieving students. Triple-threat teachers must possess both content knowledge and ability to relate to and work with

young people in an all-encompassing residential environment where the “average” student is often far above the national with regard to SAT and ACT scores (College Board, 2015). Changes in demographics combined with the financial challenges of a tuition-driven model and the changing traits of recent college graduates with regard to work ethic, skills, and desire for employment suggests the triple-threat model is under pressure.

### **Statement of the Problem to be Researched**

While the triple-threat model has been the standard in boarding schools since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, changes in finances during the last decade, shifts in pedagogy, athletics, social needs, communication, parental expectations, and available workers are putting pressure on this model. Consequently, it must be questioned whether the triple-threat model remains viable and if this model is sustainable for the future.

### **Purpose and Significance of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to explore the effectiveness and sustainability of the triple-threat model in today’s changing educational landscape in elite boarding schools. As education, the arts, and athletics become more specialized and competitive, teachers at elite boarding schools are consequently expected to excel in these areas of teaching, coaching, and the overall role of “in loco parentis.” As a result, schools are being forced to reassess the hiring model that utilizes the triple-threat teacher.

With tuition at elite schools averaging nearly \$50,000 per year, tuition-paying parents and guardians expect high-quality performance from faculty in the classroom, on the field or stage, and in the dorm. These expectations are putting pressure on schools to have the top teachers, top coaches, top artists, and top residential faculty. However, in

attempting to meet these necessities, academic deans, athletic directors, and deans of residential life at elite schools are often pitted against each other in hiring the best faculty for their respective sphere regardless of the needs of the others. Often, faculty appointments are made that leave one area of need staffed by a candidate who may have not been the strongest available for that particular area, but was the best available in another. For example, a person with a Ph.D. is hired for a chemistry position but the candidate may not add to the athletic program due to the lack of an athletics background. By looking at the effectiveness and sustainability of the triple-threat model, school leaders could be offered data that can be used to improve an often-complex hiring practice and potentially improve the experience of students and the long-term sustainability of a school by adjusting hiring practices to fit both the internal needs of the school and external changes in the greater world.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are elite American boarding schools currently utilizing the triple-threat model?
2. What kind of pressures exists in hiring for the triple-threat teacher, and are these pressures forcing a shift away from the model?
3. How are schools addressing possible pressures on the triple-threat model via staffing modifications and creativity in modifying hiring practices?
4. What is the future of the triple-threat model?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The researcher has spent the past 18 years teaching in boarding schools and attended an “elite” school as a student in Grades 8-12. During his career, the researcher

observed subtle shifts in hiring as schools struggled to meet increasingly complex needs of students while attempting to maintain the triple-threat model. A pragmatist, the researcher views the triple-threat model as important, yet facing challenges that will yield consequences for both action and inaction in addressing the future of the model. If the model is truly under stress, solutions may exist to support or modify the model to allow it to continue. Conversely, it may be that conditions have shifted to such an extent that the future of the model is in jeopardy and alternatives must be generated.

With no existing research on the triple-threat model found in elite boarding schools, the researcher carried out this study based on an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2008). In conversations with heads of schools, consultants, and both the current and former president of the NAIS, it became clear to the researcher that the triple-threat model of teacher hiring was being put under pressure by societal forces, thus forcing some schools to migrate away from the model under certain conditions. While not true of all schools, the stress on the model is a significant topic among heads of schools. As stated by one:

You are quite right that the traditional triple-threat notion is one every head and board are talking about. The challenges are many: increased parental expectations in each area, the complexity of all three facets, pressures of time on faculty, and so on. (W. MacMullen, personal communication, December 8, 2014)

According to one prominent independent school consultant:

As far as I am concerned, the triple threat model is unsustainable. One cannot perform at a high level in all three areas. Given that, I believe that boarding schools have to change their model and/or program. If not, only those with the largest endowments will survive. (J. Wickenden, personal communication, June 12, 2014)



The researcher believes that as market conditions shift, boarding schools, elite and not, may be forced to rethink and revise what has become the standard model for staffing and move towards a more flexible system that will better adapt to financial, pedagogical, and societal changes. The researcher identified three streams relevant to this study.

### **Elite Boarding School Culture**

With a limited number of scholarly writings, most of what is written centers on defining the elite nature of these schools (Cookson & Persell, 1985; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006, 2009; Kahn, 2011; MacFadden, 2008); minority representation, identification, and experience at these schools (Carney, 2012; Jenkins, 2011; Maloberti, 2010); the success of graduates of elite schools during their first year of college (Barlow, 2002); and private school-specific issues regarding academic competitiveness, technology, or discipline (Duncan, 2009; Murray, 2010; Sgro, 2006). With such a dearth of scholarly writing on the topic of boarding schools in general and boarding schools teachers specifically, the gap in research presents a clear indicator of a need for further study.

### **Certification and Training**

The debate regarding certification and teacher training is the research of two main scholars. Dan Goldhaber and Linda Darling-Hammond represent the two sides of this debate. Darling-Hammond, Berry, and Thoreson (2001), Darling-Hammond (2012), and Davis and Darling-Hammond (2012) asserted that the way ensure quality teaching is to train and certify educators. This view stands in contrast to the work of Goldhaber (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2011; Goldhaber & Walch, 2014), Harris and Sass (2011), and Kukla-Acevedo (2009) whose research does not

support the theory that certification leads to increased student achievement.

Furthermore, Goldhaber and Brewer (2000) found a negative correlation exists between certification and achievement in upper level math and science courses. This debate serves to inform the researcher as to the academic and public discourse regarding quality teaching, with elite boarding school teachers rarely being certified or trained. In contrast, formal teacher training and certification in elite boarding schools is rare and even undesirable when hiring candidates.

### **Hiring and Recruitment**

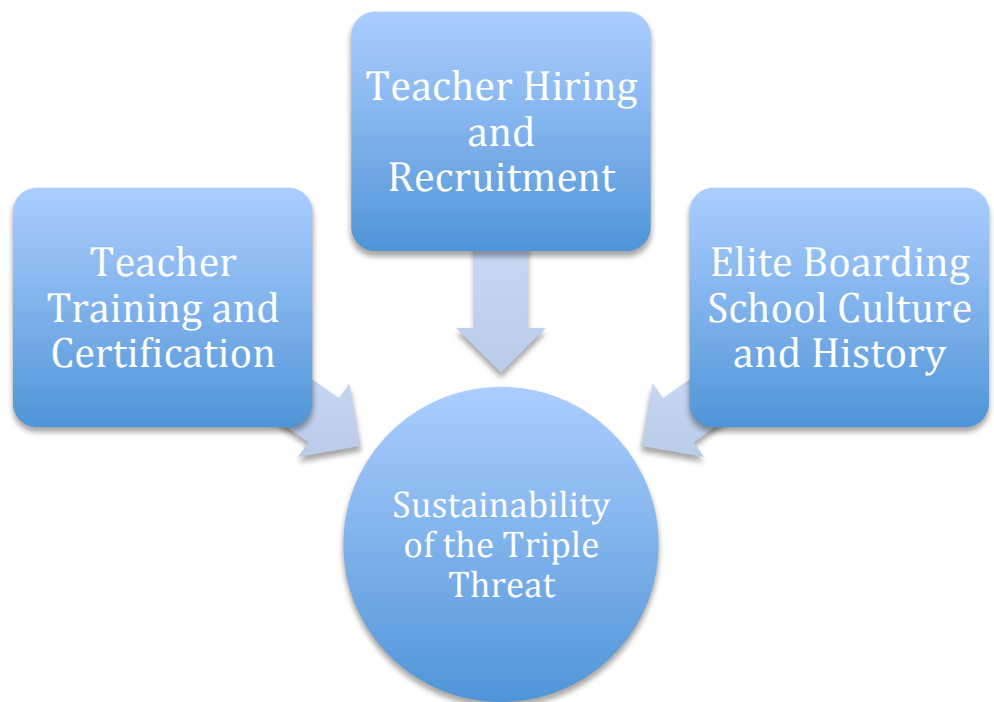
Hiring teachers in the public school realm is set by state guidelines pertaining to certification and teacher preparation. Even so, when principals hire new teachers, they often do so based on their own intuition (Donaldson, 2013; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010).

While there is no research on the hiring practices in elite boarding schools, hiring in public schools offers insights into the complex nature of selecting quality teachers from a limited pool of “qualified” candidates due to relative transparency in hiring practices in the public school realm.

Although significant differences are present between qualifications deemed important between public and boarding schools, most researchers make mention of principles looking for “fit” when filling faculty positions. This is a theme similar to the hiring in elite boarding schools, as the fit between a candidate and a school is of the utmost importance in filling a faculty position with an educator who is a good match for both the mission statement and culture of the school.

While the second two themes are related and exist in a causal relationship, the first literature stream paints a portrait of the elite boarding school world and what

academic research exists with regard to these schools. By identifying the characteristics of elite boarding schools, the second two literature streams can be used as a lens with which to view the triple-threat teacher in the absence of scholarly writing on the subject of elite boarding school hiring practices and teachers.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual framework.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Dorm Duty**

An element of the triple-threat model where faculty are “on call” in the dorm from roughly dinner (6pm) through “lights out” (11pm) and are responsible for running

dorm study hall, checking students in at lights out, and ensuring student safety during the evening hours (TABS, 2015).

### **Elite Boarding School**

School based on five metrics: size of school, geographic location, founding date, endowment, selectivity of program/rigor. The metrics were defined by Dr. Ruben Gaztambide-Fernández (2006, 2009).

### **Independent School**

A school governed by a self-perpetuating board of trustees that operates free from state and federal control and whose revenue comes from tuition, gifts, and return from endowment investments (NAIS, 2015)

### **Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges**

An accrediting agency in the Mid Atlantic commonly used by boarding schools in the region (Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools, n.d.)

### **National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS; n.d.)**

National body that recognizes independent schools

### **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC; n.d.)**

An accrediting agency used by boarding schools in New England

### **Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS; n.d.)**

An accrediting agency in the southeastern US that is used by boarding schools in this region

### **The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS; n.d.)**

A national association of schools with primarily residential student populations

### **Triple Threat**

A model of staffing in which faculty members teach, coach (lead an activity), and perform residential duties at a boarding school (Cookson & Persell, 1985)

### **Weekend Duty**

An element of the triple-threat model where faculty members are assigned to duty teams and rotate weekend student supervision and dorm coverage generally once every four or five weeks. Weekend duty includes dorm coverage, campus supervision, and chaperoning off-campus trips.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The primary assumption of this study is that the triple-threat teaching model is under pressure. While this may be the case at some elite schools, it may not be universal; opinions on this are split. In addition, some schools have already modified the model out of changes to their mission statement or in light of changes in accepted pedagogy.

Limitations of this study are in the rate of response from the 28 heads of school that were sent survey questionnaires. Data gleaned from the study could be applied across a variety of school settings and could be useful in multiple staffing situations to provide a model of the typical boarding school teacher as well as illuminate weaknesses in programs or oversight at boarding schools.

Delimitations to this study are in the choice of 28 elite schools and not choosing to study the total number of boarding schools in the United States. Non-elite schools were not chosen, as they are too varied in mission, location, size, specialty, history, and financial health to draw useful data. As a result, the manner in which they staff their school is as diverse.

### **Summary**

While representing a small overall number of faculty and students nationally, elite boarding schools have played a significant role both in the history and political life of the United States. Although the public school hiring model is well studied and the population of teachers in these schools clearly defined, faculty members at elite boarding schools and the staffing model found there has not been explored thoroughly in academic research. Elite boarding schools praise their faculty openly on their websites as “most important;” however, no academic research exists about this group of educators. Furthermore, the classic triple-threat model used by the majority of elite boarding schools is coming under pressure, and the long-term sustainability of this model must be questioned. By examining the effectiveness and sustainability of the triple-threat model, school administrations will have a better sense of how best to meet the needs of students and entire functioning of their schools in the coming years by adjusting the hiring model as needed.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction to Chapter 2**

Elite boarding schools in the United States have existed from the founding of the nation. The mid- and late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of over 100 schools (TABS, n.d.) in the United States due to a growing population, increased affluence, and a perceived need for quality education based loosely on the British boarding schools. While that number has grown to nearly 250, only 28 are defined as elite (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). These schools, elite and otherwise, continue to operate mainly out of the public eye, both purposely and from a lack of attention from the field of education and policymakers. As such, much of what is known about elite boarding schools is based on second-hand accounts, assumptions, and popular culture.

In reviewing current literature for this study, the researcher identified that there is a dearth in writing on the topic of boarding schools. What does exist is generally focused on elite schools; however, discussion of the hiring practices and faculty and teaching methods at these schools is absent from academic literature. The reasons behind this scarcity may relate to the small number of students served by these schools, the independent nature of these schools, or the desire of these schools to remain out of the public discourse. It is the researcher's sense that all three are contributing factors to the lack of research on hiring in elite boarding schools and the teachers who serve there. Consideration of elite boarding schools in academic research is noticeably absent and this finding supports the need for study. Consequently, the hiring model used in these schools is overlooked even though most school websites have full faculty profiles and the

National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) lauds teachers as the most important component of schools (NAIS, 2013). While organizations and schools publicly acknowledge the status, skills, and importance of faculty, the overarching faculty profile and hiring process at elite boarding schools is absent from academic literature.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This literature review focuses on three themes that undergird the purpose of this research. Since the researcher identified a significant gap in academic writing with regard to hiring in elite boarding schools and the teachers employed there, streams relating to the problem statement were explored as a means to set the stage for the research and for drawing parallels with public schools: (a) The Culture and History of Elite Boarding Schools, (b) Certification and Training, and (c) Hiring and Recruitment. While the second two are related and exist in a causal relationship, the first theme stands to define the elite boarding school world and what academic writing has been with regard to these schools.

By identifying the characteristics of elite boarding schools, the second two themes then might be used as a lens through which to view hiring and the teachers who populate these schools. With clear and abundant information and analysis on the academic background of public school teachers and the hiring process in public schools, a comparison can be made with the hiring phenomenon in elite boarding schools with particular focus on the triple-threat model of teacher, coach, and dorm parent that is common to most of these schools.



## Literature Review

### Elite Boarding School Culture and History

As indicated in the introduction to this review, boarding schools, while well known due to media and popular culture exposure, have been fairly unexplored in academic research. This is due in large part to the private nature of these schools and that they do not enter the public policy debate over education (Cookson & Persell, 1985). In addition, the purpose of these schools has been to operate away from the public eye and the regulations of state and federal authority. This sentiment can be readily found on school websites and via the NAIS. As such, there is little in the way of arguments about these schools or even discussion over their methods, philosophy, merits, and weaknesses. Of the works examined, each views different aspects of the boarding school world. Focusing my research on both older seminal works and more recent contributions to scholarly knowledge, three streams emerged as valuable in shedding light on the triple-threat model. The research can be grouped in the following categories: (a) defining the elite schools, (b) diversity and access at these schools, and (c) issues particular to boarding schools.

Baltzell's 1958 work *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* is not a focused study on elite boarding schools, but is a study of elite culture.

Baltzell was the first to construct and define a list of "elite" schools in the United States based on specific criteria. This "select 16" is accounted for due to their wealth and their historical significance and close relationships with Ivy League and highly selective liberal arts colleges. Although Baltzell made little mention of the teachers at these elite schools, his work is valuable in defining the "elite" school and is referenced heavily in

later works by Cookson and Persell (1985), Carney (2012), Gaztambide-Fernández (2006), and Jenkins (2011).

Seminal to a study of both elite and non-elite boarding schools in the United States is the work of Cookson and Persell (1985). *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools* offers a detailed look at the culture and practices of boarding schools based on a mixed-method case study of 55 American boarding schools using surveys, interviews, and focus groups. While Cookson and Persell focused on the elite nature of these schools, the actual sample they used is far broader than that of Baltzell (1958) or Gaztambide-Fernández (2006). As they admitted, they also visited “schools for special populations, ‘pre-prep’ schools for junior high-school children, military schools, and a publically financed boarding school” (p. 8).

Although a broad view, the information contained in their work is invaluable. Cookson and Persell (1985) took great pains to define the nature of boarding school life and the teachers who choose to work in these schools. While not a study of the triple threat, Cookson and Persell dedicated nearly 20 pages to describing boarding school teachers, the way they are hired, their academic backgrounds, the expectations placed upon them, and the valuable place they hold as “silent partners” (p. 85). The picture painted by Cookson and Persell is that of a true academic who is skilled, hard working, and dedicated to both students and the “total institution” (p. 86). Cookson and Persell were the first to use the term “triple threat” in academic work and are cited in every other scholarly publication on boarding schools reviewed as part of this study.

While not the oldest of the studies encountered, Gaztambide-Fernández's *Lives of Distinction: Ideology, Space, and Ritual in Processes of Identification at an Elite*

*Boarding School* (2006) and “What is an Elite Boarding School?” (2009) identified characteristics of elite boarding schools. Many of his findings, while narrow, can be applied to other boarding schools. Gaztambide-Fernández (2006, 2009) used five metrics to place schools in the “elite” category. Schools must meet three of the five metrics. Age, location, selectivity, endowment, SAT scores and selectivity of college matriculation are all used to set 28 schools apart from others. Having a founding date before 1900 establishes the longevity of the school and its longstanding contribution to education. Schools must be located in New England with an endowment of at least \$100 million and with an admissions selectivity of 35%. SAT averages must be at least 1800 and Peterson’s Guide must rank the top three colleges the school graduates attend as “most selective” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2009). While the list of 28 schools leaves nearly 200 schools classified as non-elite, his work does give perimeters for establishing the top schools and an understanding of boarding schools in general.

In *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at Saint Paul’s School* (2012), Kahn, like Gaztambide-Fernández, focused on the role of elite boarding schools as institutions that perpetuate elite society. This ethnographic single school case study of St. Paul’s School in New Hampshire presents a unique picture of culture in elite schools. Kahn attended St. Paul’s as a student, then returned as a faculty member, and finally as a researcher, making this study valuable due to multiple perspectives being shown. Kahn spends a great deal of time illuminating the role of teachers at St. Paul’s and what makes these educators unique. While he does mention the triple threat, it is largely about the roles teachers play at the school; there is no discussion of the hiring model or the potential pressures it faces.

*Undergraduate Success in College: The Impact of the Boarding School*

*Experience* by Elizabeth Barlow (2002) specifically focused on the impact boarding schools have on college preparedness. Many of the schools Barlow used for her research into the impact of boarding schools on first-year college success are on the list of 28 “elite” schools. Both Gaztambide-Fernández and Barlow identified the unique characteristics of boarding schools from a historical perspective; however, Barlow (2002) also used the history of these schools as a way of clarifying their place as “feeders” for elite colleges and universities. By quantifying the academic rigor of the New England schools she used in her study, Barlow established a value-added justification for the “elite” reputation of these schools, which crafted a more personal portrait of the students emerging from these schools.

Common in Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) and Barlow’s (2002) research are the great lengths they went to to differentiate “elite” boarding schools from other types of private institutions such as day schools and parochial schools. This is an important distinction to draw, as the general public, or even the field of education research, is generally unaware of the significant differences in finances, mission statements, and operating procedures that exist between elite boarding schools and non-elite boarding schools and day schools, parochial schools, and other “private” institutions as well. These differences can significantly impact the staffing needs and hiring processes of schools and the expectations placed on the faculty members.

In *To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required*, MacFadden (2008) continued on the subject of the “elite” school and tied his thesis to the high number of prominent leaders that emerge from these schools. While identifying much of school culture,

especially in the area of academic and athletic competition, MacFadden provided a historical view of the elite school based on Mill's (1956) "power elite" view of American politics and society in which elite status and power are reinforced via connections and the perpetuation of status via elite institutions. However, MacFadden (2008) failed to address changes seen in the past 20 years with regard to increased student diversity and expanded financial aid that has become a goal of most schools and trade groups such as NAIS and TABS. These changes impact both the students and faculty at schools as well as the manner in which schools are staffed and operated (NAIS, 2014, 2015; TABS, 2015).

Maloberti (2010), Jenkins (2011), and Carney (2012) each focused on minority representation at boarding schools and arrived at similar conclusions. All three authors cited Gaztambide-Fernández (2009) and supported his study as being a significant work in the research on elite boarding schools. Each author illustrated the historic lineages of boarding schools and how access to these schools has been limited based on admissions standards, social perception, and values on the part of schools and families, cost, and even racial bias. Academic rigor as well as cost was cited by all three as major deterrents in being more inclusive with respect to student populations. Minority students from poor areas often lacked the academic preparation needed to attend elite schools and working class families may earn too much to qualify for aid, yet not enough to cover the cost of attending. All three noted that this traditional trend has changed significantly, although the minority students, both in terms of race and socioeconomic status, often experience difficulty in assimilating into the majority populations at these schools.

Present in all three of the following works is what seems to be a critical analysis of elite boarding schools that can be called into question because of NAIS (2014) data that show racial and economic diversity at boarding schools outpaces that at many public institutions. Much of the criticism levied by Maloberti (2010), Jenkins (2011), and Carney (2012) is focused on the difficulty minority students have in assimilating into the boarding school world and how that experience can leave them feeling alienated and out of place even while having access to these schools. In all three studies, the triple threat is not referred to directly even though teachers are spoken of often as important factors in the culture of these schools.

While elite boarding schools stand as unique institutions in the American educational landscape, many specific situations that arise fall well outside of formal educational policy and are often “grey” with regard to any formalized educational protocol. Sgro (2006), Murray (2010), and Duncan (2009) all focused on particular social or academic issues affecting elite boarding schools today. While still taking great time to construct a background of these schools to put relevant issues in context as Gaztambide-Fernández (2009), Barlow (2002), Khan (2012) and MacFadden (2008) did, each attempts to view issues at these schools from a more practical and less theoretical or historical angle.

Sgro (2006) aimed his focus on the role of parental involvement at an elite boarding school. As residential institutions, there is an inherent lack of parental involvement and presence aside from the opening of the year, “parents weekend” or graduation. Absent from elite boarding schools is a PTA or council that represents parents, often due to the geographic distances from which students are drawn. As a

result, parents rely heavily on faculty and administration to keep them informed or address questions and concerns they may have regarding their child.

Drawing Duncan (2009) into this conversation is effective since elite boarding schools are not public institutions and therefore, not subject to the same oversight as public schools, thereby creating a situation in which parents can remove the students at will and or students may be dismissed for a variety of reasons based on contract law. When it comes to parents, Sgro (2006) illustrated a high level of trust placed in the hands of school officials to act as “in loco parentis” and make decisions that are best for students. Duncan (2009) applied legal standards to this concept in that upon admission, parents are asked to sign multiple contracts essentially giving the school a wide range of authority. This can be seen in enrollment contracts and mandatory signing of student handbooks by parents.

The school-parent relationship established by Duncan (2009) relates to the work of Sgro (2006), as parents are expected to sit to the side and allow schools to do their job. “Helicopter parents,” those who are always present and struggle to allow their child to work through challenges on their own, are not often seen in elite boarding schools. In addition, school contracts as described by Duncan (2009) clearly define methods for contacting school personnel and when parents are allowed on campus. Legal challenges at boarding schools usually fall towards individual teachers, who are also expected to sign contracts and codes of conduct.

Both Sgro (2006) and Duncan (2009) demonstrated that contract law is the standard for the relationship between family and school. In effect, parents choose to send their children to elite boarding schools and the school, in turn, promises a level of service

as guided by the school mission statement. Schools see the mission statement as being the framework within which the school operates. Failure to uphold the mission statement, as described by Duncan (2009), is an issue of “breach of contract” between school and family and little more. As such, the role of parents in boarding schools as noted by Sgro (2006) and Duncan (2009) is that of a “customer.” In both works, teachers are only referred to briefly and no specific reference to hiring models is made.

The final work of literature in this stream is also the only one to address teachers at elite boarding schools. Murray (2010) attempted to address opportunities for professional development in elite boarding schools. Like other works in this area, the author illustrated the nature of private schools, but in focusing on faculty, Murray painted a better picture of the people who are responsible for the level of education and preparation described in the articles referenced above. With teacher training and professional development being important topics in education, Murray (2010) illuminated the antiquated methods boarding schools use with regard to professional learning opportunities. Although focusing on both boarding and day schools, Murray (2010) makes note of the increased level of autonomy teachers in these schools have along with the challenges faced in providing professional development due to issues of funding, scheduling, and relevance of opportunities offered. When viewed alongside the other articles in this stream, Murray (2010) offers a less ethereal vision of private schools and brings the practical weaknesses and challenges these schools face into full view.

Missing from all of the articles reviewed in this strand is anything more than an anecdotal or narrative look at hiring and faculty at elite boarding schools. It is only when reviewing publications from individual schools, school websites, or data and articles from



TABS or the NAIS, do details emerge regarding hiring practices, teacher profiles, or do job/duty assignments come into the conversation. Even still, agreement regarding the future of the triple-threat model is not present. As Jim Wickenden stated:

As far as I am concerned, the “triple threat” model is unsustainable. One cannot perform at a high level in all three areas. It demands too much time, requires too much energy, and assumes that teachers are skilled and passionate about all three areas. (personal communication, June 12, 2014)

Bassett (2011) wrote in his NAIS blog on the need for a more professional culture in independent schools in which more is done to support the craft and profession of teaching through meaningful professional development opportunities and an increased emphasis on teaching as a skill that merits a higher status within our society. Some of this sentiment is found in the writings and internal publications of school heads. Daniel Roach (2006), Headmaster at St. Andrew’s School in Delaware spoke directly to the role of the faculty in boarding schools in a collection of essays about the school: “We do pour hours of time, energy, and attention each year into our work as teachers, advisors, coaches, dorm parents, directors, and mentors—we feel a passionate commitment to the development and welfare of our students” (Roach, 2006, p. 4). While this sentiment expresses the ethos present in the faculty at this school, it does not explain the hiring process or the triple-threat profile of teacher, coach, and dorm parent. In addition, the sustainability of the model is not addressed in research and does not exist outside of anecdotes and conversation with heads of schools, teachers, and consultants.

Most school webpages offer a great deal of information on their faculty via faculty bios, especially in regard to academic, artistic, and cultural backgrounds, via faculty biographies. Of note are the colleges and degrees awarded to faculty, as this

information is useful in building a profile of the teachers at these schools as well as the hiring tendencies of the administrations. The Hotchkiss School (2015), as well as most other boarding schools, puts forth fairly detailed information on their faculty, including levels of educations, past-times, hobbies and interests, and family information.

According to the Hotchkiss School website (2015), its history department has 20 members holding a total of 18 masters degrees and five doctorates, with the most number of degrees earned being those from Harvard University. This type of information provides demographic data in which to view faculty at elite schools and highlights the hiring standards present with regard to academic backgrounds. By having data regarding the academic backgrounds of faculty teaching at elite boarding schools, the researcher can see hiring trends with regard to what schools are looking for as to academic preparation and achievement.

### **Teacher Training and Certification**

With most teachers at elite boarding schools not holding state teacher certification (C. Rappaport, personal communication, May 16, 2015), questions arise as to the effectiveness of these teachers since they do not meet mandated public standards for highly qualified teachers. There is a great deal of debate in the academic literature regarding the role and effectiveness of teacher certification and training. Sharp divisions exist on both sides of the discussion and quantitative evidence supporting arguments is inconclusive and (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Goldhaber & Walch, 2014; Goldhaber, Gross, & Player, 2011), confusing due to the specific focus of numerous studies and the inability to control for multiple variables without invalidating the results.

At the center of the pro-certification debate is the work of Darling-Hammond. In their research, Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) and Darling-Hammond (2012) pointed to the correlation between student achievement and highly credentialed teachers in several studies in which she was the principal investigator. Darling-Hammond et al. (2001) used scores on standardized math tests to support their argument that teacher certification and training are the best way to ensure improvements in student achievement. The difficulty the researcher detects in coming to any substantive conclusion regarding teacher certification and training as a result of their findings is from the specific focus of her work on small populations of students in terms of demographics and overall sample size; Darling-Hammond's focus is generally on students in underserved districts and her support for teacher training programs and certification is clear in her writing. This shortcoming in research is shared in other studies (Baines, 2010; Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2011) that support teacher certification and teacher preparation as the singular metric by which to judge HQT by focusing on small sample sizes of specific demographics and limited scope of application.

At the opposite end of the debate is the research of Dan Goldhaber (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Goldhaber & Walch, 2014; Goldhaber et al., 2011) who put forth the finding that certification does not have a positive impact on student achievement, and the use of it as the only standard to deem a teacher high quality is misplaced. In his work, Goldhaber focused on math and science scores of students taught by both certified and uncertified teachers across a large sample pool of grade levels in an effort to find a correlation between student achievement and teacher certification. Sharkey and Goldhaber (2008) used uncertified teachers in private schools as a means of comparison

with certified public school teachers when looking at student achievement on standardized tests. The findings of their study indicate that non-certified teachers of math and science at NAIS schools produce the highest 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade math and science scores, as compared to certified teachers. A weakness of the study is the small subject focus on math and science in a limited number of schools and using a limited number of grade levels. Additionally, variables that cannot be controlled for such as parent support and resources were utilized.

Harris and Sass (2011) and Kukla-Acevedo (2009) used past SAT scores and college GPAs of both certified and uncertified teachers as a more valid predictor of teacher effectiveness than certification alone. Both studies reference Goldhaber's work and support the idea that teacher training and certification as the sole means of ensuring quality teaching and subsequent improvements in student achievement must be looked at more thoroughly before any definitive answers as to its effectiveness can be reached. Harris and Sass (2011) found that teacher SAT scores and GPAs in college courses are not related to teacher productivity in the classroom and informal experience in the classroom over the first several years of teaching plays the greatest role in producing "HQT." This contradicts the findings of Kukla-Acevedo (2009) in which the data suggest that a teacher's past GPA in college math courses is the most important factor in student achievement once initial levels of teacher experience are taken into account. This view can be supported by many faculty profiles found on the websites of elite boarding schools in regard to the rigor of colleges attended.

Adding to inconclusive results of studies in this stream is the work of Stronge et al. (2007). This study focuses on the learning outcomes of a narrow group of students in

North Carolina and looks specifically at the impact of teachers with National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) credentials. The findings are inconclusive and reiterate the lack of sound data with regard to the positive impacts of certifications. Goldhaber was sighted often in this article, thus indicating that his work may be seminal to the certification debate.

The work of Wayne and Youngs (2003) offer a historiographical approach that makes uses of studies by other scholars mentioned in this review (Goldhaber and Darling-Hammond). Their study concludes that coursework and college GPA of teachers play a significant role in their effectiveness in promoting positive student achievement. As with other studies, certification is not seen as the sole predictor of teaching success and the authors call for more investigation before making policy decisions.

This stream offers a wealth of information and insight into the nature of the teacher certification and training debate and illuminates both the inconclusive and contradictory results of studies done so far. These works are informative to this study since they act as a counterpoint to the current definitions of HQT and teacher certification and teacher training are non-factors in boarding schools, since neither are required or even sought after. More to the point, boarding schools, elite or not, look to hire teachers who are a good match for the school's mission, culture, and student population, not for a narrowly defined set of credentials. In addition, viewing the academic records of teachers at elite boarding schools sheds light on their academic abilities based on the colleges and universities they attended. From that data, it is possible to estimate SAT/ACT scores and use this as a comparison to teacher graduates of schools of education who gain certification.

Hiring teachers for “fit” is a common goal for boarding school administrators (TABS, 2015). Based on general data from the NAIS (2014) and surveys conducted by TABS (2011) and CalWest Educators Placement (2016), the majority of boarding school teachers are not certified nor do they come from formal teacher preparation programs, but are from selective, highly selective, or most selective liberal arts colleges and universities. Even so, positive student outcomes can be seen; therefore, the need for effectiveness of certification and teacher training programs as the only measure of teacher qualification must be called into question at a time when many question, “Are Americans losing confidence in their teachers” (Peterson, 2013)?

### **Hiring and Recruitment**

Hiring and recruitment of public school teachers is fraught with challenges based on situational requirements to remain in adherence with state policies regarding minimum qualifications. Much of the content found in this stream centers on the difficulty school principals have ascertaining the attributes of teachers beyond meeting minimum state-mandated standards. In this section, the researcher explores how state and federal guidelines influence hiring practices in public and charter schools and how school principals rely on a variety of methods and practices beyond viewing credentials when hiring new faculty. Even in the public school realm, hiring practices take on a more complex nature, with principals looking for candidates who mesh with the culture of a specific school.

This practice shows a similarity between elite boarding schools and public schools in hiring for “fit” even though credentialing standards for candidates is markedly different. This stream offers valuable information and insights against which to

juxtapose hiring in elite boarding schools, as there is nothing written concerning hiring/staffing practices in these schools. With this in mind, effective conversation between the public and independent realms could be explored based on the findings of this study.

Mertz (2010) provided a great deal of information in a qualitative study of hiring practices based on interviews with school principals. The author concluded that hiring for “fit” and by “trusting my gut” are dominant factors in the way teachers are hired. As viewed in the literature (Mertz, 2010; Rutledge et al., 2010), “fit” can describe qualifications, age and experience, academic background, gender, minority representation, personality attributes, and more. Once in the initial school applicant pool based on the fulfillment of state requirements, job applicants are judged subjectively by public school principals with regard to their ability to enhance a given school. This study aligns well with two studies, Rutledge et al. (2010) and Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, and Ingle (2008), in the way these principals have to “bridge and buffer” between the particular needs of their school, their personal predilections with regard to character traits, and the mandated external certification requirements imposed by the state. In doing so, the hiring process, as stated by Rutledge et al. (2010) can be summed up as “certify, blink, hire” (p. 237).

Ingle, Rutledge, and Bishop (2011) continued to address the complex balancing act that principals face when hiring teaching candidates who may meet state requirements, but do not “fit” with the culture of the school. Cranston (2012) continued to illuminate the conflict principals face in the hiring of teachers regarding the limited number of candidates available based on the standards put forth by the state. Given the

rigidity of state standards, principals may hire teachers who, although they meet the job requirements based on state guidelines, may not be the best “fit” for the specific position offered.

Creating a more focused and formal study of the concept of “fit,” Tooms, Lugg, and Bogotch (2010) focused on the hiring of administrators based on the “three letter word,” with “fit” being that word (p. 97). They assumed all candidates for teaching positions meet the same standards and have uniform quality resumes; however, they are hired or passed over based on the intangible notion of “fit.” The concept presented by Tooms et al. extends well beyond the hiring of administrators, as is evident in other articles seen in this review.

Ingle and Rutledge (2010) produced an interesting hypothetical case study that demonstrates the multiple challenges faced by public school administrators that fall outside the realm of defined or codified procedure when trying to meet very specific needs of individual schools or communities at large. In this article, Ingle and Rutledge stepped beyond the oft-simplified concept of hiring to illustrate the significant nuances often present, especially with regard to circumventing guidelines when attempting to hire for hard-to-staff positions, in Title I schools.

Gross and Dearmond (2010) focused on the hiring practices of charter schools and concluded that these schools, positioned outside the public school realm, have an advantage in hiring HQT because they are freer from the constraints to which public schools must adhere in the hiring process, even though a percentage of their teachers must be state certified. While more autonomous in hiring practices, according to the study, charter schools do not fare better in recruiting HQT based on the offer of higher



salaries or in hiring early. The study asserted that schools deemed to be the “best” attract the “best” teachers and is supported by the work of Ingle and Rutledge (2010).

Hiring in elite boarding schools is completed by May, and much is noted anecdotally about “hiring early” to get the “best” candidates. In addition, once teaching applicants have landed on the “yes” pile for campus interviews, much of the hiring process continues along the lines of what the aforementioned studies refer to as “fit.” Undefined, and perhaps rightly so, “fit” allows school principals to make staffing decisions based on a non-specific “feel” for a candidate and how they may acclimate to the culture and needs of a particular school. As noted in conversation with John Chubb (personal communication, May 18, 2014), most NAIS schools “hire for qualification over certification” and much of judging a candidate as “qualified” is with how well they “fit” the needs of the school and its mission statement.

### **Conclusion**

After a review of the literature, a study of hiring practices in elite boarding schools with attention to the triple-threat model of hiring for teacher, coach, and dorm parent has academic merit and could serve as a starting point for communication and exchange between public and independent schools with regard to who they hire as teachers and how they go about doing so. With the amount of academic literature in existence regarding national teacher training, hiring, certification, and qualification, hiring in independent elite boarding schools stands apart from all other models and yet, remains unstudied.

In light of the present challenges facing American education, an alternative to the current definition of HQT should be explored as a means offering additional possibilities

for staffing schools. As illustrated in the literature pertaining to boarding schools reviewed here, teachers in elite boarding schools have produced quality outcomes with regard to student achievement in correlation with SAT scores and college matriculation, but have not been investigated as a group to determine common characteristics, competencies, backgrounds, or the method and philosophy by which they are hired. In addition, given the cost of an elite boarding school education and the willingness of families to pay this cost, there is clearly a perceived value added to this type of education.

Based on the literature, the effectiveness of teacher training and certification programs is inconclusive and the hiring of potentially HQT candidates is constrained by state guidelines regarding certification and training. While elite boarding schools have retained this triple-threat model for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the model is facing significant pressure from both internal and external forces with regard to its sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As such, exploring alternatives to the model, ways that the model can be adjusted, and accounting for and addressing the underlying reasons the model is facing pressure could be seen as significant in the survival of schools that employ this philosophy when staffing a school.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### **Introduction**

As illustrated in Chapter 1 of this study, the 28 elite boarding schools, as defined by Gaztambide-Fernández (2006), occupy a unique place in the American education landscape. The mission statements of these schools, the student populations they serve, the manner in which they educate, their system of governance, and the people who work in these organizations are all unique when juxtaposed against the American system of public education.

With a paucity of academic writing on the topic of teachers in elite boarding schools as addressed in Chapter 2, research into the nature of hiring in these schools and lessons that may be taken from such a study and applied more broadly to all boarding schools is needed. By focusing on the hiring methods in elite American boarding schools with specific attention paid to the triple-threat model, the researcher will be able to ascertain the method by which faculty members are hired at elite boarding schools and the functionality and sustainability of the triple-threat model in hiring.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the triple-threat hiring model in elite American boarding schools has come under pressure in recent years due to changes on multiple fronts (Barlow, 2002; Carney, 2012; Cookson & Persell, 1984; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). With parents more connected and involved due to advances in technology; greater demands by parents for “expert” teachers, coaches, and residential life faculty; financial constraints faced by many schools with regard to staffing due to increased demand for financial aid; and changes in viewpoints toward work-life balance by Millennials, the

traditional hiring model in elite boarding schools may be facing stresses and limitations. With schools needing to fill faculty vacancies to meet the multi-dimensional demands of athletics, arts, residential life, and academics, the complexities of the hiring matrix can be difficult to address in any hiring cycle.

This research focused on answering the following questions.

1. How are elite American boarding schools currently utilizing the triple-threat model?
2. What kind of pressures exists in hiring for the triple-threat teacher, and are these pressures forcing a shift away from the model?
3. How are schools addressing possible pressures on the triple-threat model via staffing modifications and creativity in modifying hiring practices?
4. What is the future of the triple-threat model?

Using 28 schools identified as “elite” based on the work of Baltzell (1958) and Gaztambide-Fernández (2006) and that meet the criteria for the study as defined, the researcher conducted an explanatory sequential mixed method study (Creswell, 2008) based on the formation of a theory grounded in the results of the data collected. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) stated, “A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents” (p. 23). In this sense, the phenomenon being studied is that of the triple threat as seen through the eyes of the heads of elite schools. It is this grounded theory that will serve to inform schools, consultants, and researchers as to the sustainability of the triple threat in elite schools.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The researcher designed a grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) approach using an explanatory sequential mixed methods model (Creswell, 2008) to address the phenomenon of the triple-threat model as experienced by heads of school. Research regarding elite boarding schools is limited, with none focused specifically on faculty and staffing. Any study involving teachers at these schools must address the culture of elite boarding schools from the standpoint of who works there, in what capacity, why they choose to do so, and why the triple threat is used. In this study, the focus was on the perceptions and experiences of heads of school with regard to the triple-threat model and as the persons responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and being the ones who issue contracts.

In this design, the researcher first gathered and explored the survey data in the form of responses to a targeted questionnaire sent to the heads of elite schools focused on their hiring practices and the triple-threat model. Next, the researcher conducted interviews with the subset of the questionnaire participants. The researcher limited the questionnaire to 23 questions to minimize the risk of survey fatigue (Creswell, 2008), thereby allowing greater engagement with the survey instrument by heads of elite schools. These questions explored the nature of individual schools to track any similar occurrences at schools sharing typological similarities in location, size, endowment dollars per student, and mission statement.

As this ordinal data were collected, responses were sorted to identify patterns among elite school types to determine how they viewed the triple threat and in what way they may be dealing with potential pressures. Given the range of student body sizes,

endowment dollars per student, and geographic setting, it is possible that schools view and manage the triple threat differently based on these factors. The researcher reports the median and mode followed by multi-variable analysis.

The data collected by the researcher in this phase tracked trends and assisted in the interview phase of the study by scaffolding questions. By focusing on the data collected in the first phase, the emerging theory on the sustainability of the triple threat was grounded in the questionnaire responses. Responses from the questionnaire offered quantifiable data regarding the triple threat while interviews served in a manner in which to explain, elaborate, and corroborate the results of the questionnaire.

Viewing the triple threat as a researcher brought about multiple views from heads of elite schools. No single situation impacts the use or sustainability of the triple-threat model. Instead, multiple uses, experiences, and challenges exist depending on the history of the school, the school's mission, the view of triple threat by the head of school, the location of the school, and multiple other factors. In this sense, a concrete theory as to the sustainability of the model has not yet been formed. The researcher used constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to address differences in views regarding the triple-threat model and the sustainability of the model by comparing both quantitative and qualitative responses.

Analyzing how the data and viewpoints relate to each other is essential since situational differences drove the way heads of school viewed potential pressures on the triple threat and the way their school may have addressed them. With different views and experiences by heads of school regarding the triple-threat phenomenon coming to light, the researcher engaged in continuous memo writing to keep ideas, information,

conversations, and experiences organized in a manner that allowed data to tell a story.

In doing so, the researcher assembled a matrix profile of what challenges, strengths, and changes are impacting the triple-threat model and thus be able to formulate a grounded theory addressing the sustainability of the model based on both the quantitative and qualitative phases of this study.

With elite boarding schools remaining outside the eye research regarding hiring and staffing practices, the researcher used all schools defined as elite (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2006). Due to the independent nature of these schools and the manner in which they operate, a case study approach would only yield data on one particular school and not the entire group. Thus, focusing on a single academically recognized typology yielded results more representative of elite schools as a whole.

## **Site and Population**

### **Population Description**

Heads of school at elite boarding schools are the sole employees of a board of trustees and entrusted with enacting programs that carry out the school's mission statement. In this capacity, heads of school are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school. Some heads of school are longstanding members of a particular organization, having been part of a school for 20 or more years. Others are new to their respective school though highly qualified via experience and education. Some heads come from academic backgrounds and possess the highest of academic degrees. Others are longtime "school people" who have made their career serving independent boarding schools as teachers, coaches, advisors, dorm parents: the triple-threat. Still others come from business or law, bringing added dimensions and experiences to the head's role.

After the financial crisis of 2008, those with strong business or legal backgrounds replaced some retiring heads. Heads of schools oversee all aspects of school life indirectly by hiring an administrative team as they see fit. The head of school issues faculty and staff contracts and is responsible for both hiring and firing all school employees. Heads have strong feelings regarding the triple threat and many see it from multiple viewpoints: manager, former triple threat, steward of institution, and the like. Heads of school are most knowledgeable regarding changes in elite boarding schools. Changes or pressures to the established triple-threat model would be clear to the head of school; therefore, the head of school would be most able to respond to questions regarding the sustainability of the triple-threat model. While all heads may identify the pressures on the model, each head will approach these pressures differently as a result of the individual needs, strengths, weaknesses, missions, and overall states of their respective schools.

### **Site Description**

Elite boarding schools (see Table 2) share common traits as defined in Chapter 1 and based on the research of Gaztambide-Fernández (2006). While the size of their student bodies, geographic location, endowment, and coed/single-sex status may vary, the commonalities link these 28 schools and define them as elite. Long seen as bastions of privilege, elite schools have become more diverse and representative of current demographics (NAIS, 2014; TABS, 2011). While greatly changed since their earlier days, elite schools offer impressive academic, artistic, athletic, and social offerings in an often park-like setting that mirrors the oldest liberal arts colleges.



Table 2

*Elite Boarding Schools*

| <b>School</b>                             | <b>State</b>  | <b>Year Founded</b> | <b>Number of Students</b> |
|---|---------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Blair Academy                             | New Jersey    | 1848                | 458                       |
| Brooks School                             | Massachusetts | 1926                | 380                       |
| Choate                                    | Connecticut   | 1890                | 865                       |
| Deerfield Academy                         | Massachusetts | 1797                | 636                       |
| Emma Willard School                       | New York      | 1814                | 346                       |
| Episcopal High School                     | Virginia      | 1839                | 435                       |
| The Governor's Academy                    | Massachusetts | 1763                | 405                       |
| Groton School                             | Massachusetts | 1884                | 381                       |
| The Hill School                           | Pennsylvania  | 1851                | 515                       |
| The Hotchkiss School                      | Connecticut   | 1891                | 600                       |
| The Kent School                           | Connecticut   | 1906                | 570                       |
| The Lawrenceville School                  | New Jersey    | 1810                | 816                       |
| Loomis Chaffee School                     | Connecticut   | 1914                | 675                       |
| Middlesex School                          | Massachusetts | 1902                | 375                       |
| Milton Academy                            | Massachusetts | 1798                | 695                       |
| Miss Porter's School                      | Connecticut   | 1843                | 320                       |
| Northfield Mount Hermon                   | Massachusetts | 1879                | 650                       |
| The Peddie School                         | New Jersey    | 1865                | 551                       |
| Phillips Academy, Andover                 | Massachusetts | 1778                | 1138                      |
| Phillips Exeter Academy                   | New Hampshire | 1781                | 1000                      |
| Saint Mark's School                       | Massachusetts | 1865                | 350                       |
| St George's School                        | Rhode Island  | 1896                | 370                       |
| St. Paul's School                         | New Hampshire | 1856                | 531                       |
| Tabor Academy                             | Massachusetts | 1876                | 514                       |
| The Taft School                           | Connecticut   | 1890                | 514                       |
| The Thacher School                        | California    | 1889                | 240                       |
| The Westminster School                    | Connecticut   | 1888                | 393                       |
| The Woodbury Forest School                | Virginia      | 1889                | 396                       |
| Numbers reflect the 2014/2015 School Year |               |                     | Total 15,864              |

Throughout their history, elite boarding schools have been feeder schools for Ivy League universities and prestigious liberal arts schools in New England (Cookson & Persell, 1985). First identified by Digby Baltzell (1958) and dubbed “The Select 16,” elite boarding schools are places of both privilege and high academic, athletic, and cultural standards. Elite boarding schools have rigorous admissions standards, demanding curriculum, exceptional physical plants, large endowments, impressive college matriculation lists, and freedom to operate academically as they see fit due to their independent nature. As stated by Carney (2012), “Elite boarding schools have traditionally sent the majority of their graduates to the most elite colleges and universities in the nation” (p. 1). Graduates of elite boarding schools have been highly visible in American politics and business, with several presidential candidates in the 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 Presidential elections having attended elite boarding or elite day schools.

### **Research Methods**

This study was carried out in two phases (see Table 3). First, a quantitative study was conducted via a targeted questionnaire sent to heads of elite boarding schools. As results came in, they were analyzed based on ordinal data to identify trends and patterns. The second phase of the study was qualitative in the form of interviews with heads of elite boarding schools.

Table 3

*Methods of Collection and Analysis*

| <b>Research Questions</b>  | <b>Mixed-Methods</b>         | <b>Data Collection</b>      | <b>Data Analysis</b>              |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| How are elite American boarding schools currently utilizing the triple threat model? | Quantitative                 | Qualtrics Survey Instrument | Multi-Variable and Somers' D Test |
| What kind of pressure is being seen in hiring for the triple threat teacher?         | Quantitative                 | Qualtrics Survey Instrument | Multi-Variable and Somers' D Test |
| How are schools addressing pressures on the triple threat model?                     | Qualitative Phenomenological | Standard Interview Protocol | Open Coding                       |
| What is the future of the triple-threat model?                                       | Qualitative Phenomenological | Standard Interview Protocol | Open Coding                       |

**Description of Each Method Used**

**Questionnaire.** With little data regarding the triple-threat model, the researcher found it important to provide quantitative data to support the construction of a grounded theory. As Creswell (2008) stated, "Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitude, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 13). Using a questionnaire to quantify trends or attitudes allows rapid turnaround in data collection (Creswell, 2008), thereby shortening the time between the quantitative and qualitative phases.

The researcher distributed a 23-item questionnaire delivered via a secure email link using Qualtrics (see Appendix) during Phase 1 of the study. The first four questions were descriptive in nature to establish any trends that existed in the varying school types with regard to the following: size, physical location (urban, suburban, rural), endowment

dollars per student, and percentage of revenue from tuition. Answers to these questions were multiple-choice in design. The next 20 questions used a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” or “Almost Always” to “Almost Never” to focus on the staffing methods employed by schools and possible pressures emerging with regard to the triple-threat model. A 4-point scale was used to eliminate neutral responses, as they do not provide data (Behnke & Kelly, 2011).

Validity of the survey instrument is demonstrated by ability of the instrument to measure what the researcher intended to measure (Smith & Smith, 2004). In this study, the researcher determined the attitudes, experiences, and perception of heads of elite boarding schools regarding the triple-threat model. Both content validity and face validity were high based on the focus on the sample and design of the questionnaire. Due to the manner in which the questionnaire was constructed, it was validated.

The questionnaire was created using input from multiple sources. Questions were crafted with the assistance of independent schools leaders including heads of non-elite schools; the president of NAIS; the president of the Independent Curriculum Group; the head of research for TABS, Carney-Sandoe, CalWest, Independent Thinking, and EduDirections consulting firms; and colleagues across multiple schools. This gave the questionnaire a great deal of credibility within the independent school community and contributed positively to its overall validity.

With this method, the researcher gathered statistical evidence and analyzed it to identify trends impacting the triple-threat model at elite boarding schools, whether or not it is under pressure, what those pressures may be, how schools are addressing any pressures, and whether or not the model is sustainable. Reminders were emailed to heads

of schools at 10 and 17 days after initial contact. Surveys closed after 21 days to expedite the retrieval of information. In addition, it was assumed that after 21 days, heads of schools who did not respond would not respond even if given more time to do so. The researcher carried out a descriptive categorical comparison via outputs available on Qualtrics and SPSS once the survey was closed and data were collected. In doing so, mean and mode tracked trends in answers based on school typology as identified in the first five questions. This ordinal data provided the researcher with context when carrying out the qualitative portion of this study.

**Interviews.** The researcher conducted open-ended interviews with heads of elite schools following the survey phase of the study. Open-ended interviews allowed the collection of detailed views from heads of schools to help explain the initial quantitative survey (Creswell, 2008). This phenomenological approach was chosen for this phase of the study as it allowed for the exploration of the way heads of school experienced the triple-threat model and any pressures or changes the model is facing. Interview questions were informed via conversations with independent school consultants and heads of non-elite schools, the NAIS, TABS, and the law firm of Shipman-Goodwin. The wording of questions and tone were guided by protocols developed by Creswell (2008). The interview protocol included the following questions:

- In what ways have you seen hiring for the triple-threat model change during your time as head of school?
- In what ways is the triple threat successful at your school?
- How do you envision the triple threat in the future?

- With the myriad changes facing schools, what changes are you seeing with regard to staffing and in what ways does that shift away from or reinforce the triple-threat?

Interviews with between five and eight heads of elite schools provided optimum feedback and were valid based on the sample size. Primary interview questions were open-ended and allowed for a full exploration of the triple-threat model. Secondary questions were generated based on the ordinal data gathered during Phase 1 of the study. Interviews were conducted and recorded either face-to-face or via Skype. Recordings of interviews will be stored in a password-protected folder on a password-protected personal computer for three years following the publication of this dissertation.

### **Data Analysis**

**Quantitative stage.** Data analysis on the quantitative phase of this study was carried out via outputs on Qualtrics and SPSS. Descriptive statistics (Creswell, 2008) were used to identify patterns. Measures of central tendency based on mean and standard deviation were calculated via the use of ordinal data.

The researcher carried out a Somers' D test using SPSS to determine the strength and direction of association between dependent (Questions 4-23) and independent variables (Questions 1-3). Somers' D is an asymmetric measure between two variables, which plays a central role as a parameter behind rank or "non-parametric" statistical methods (Newson, 2002). Somers' D allowed for ranking of the responses based on the predictor variable x and the outcome variable y. Use of Somers' D as a predictor performance indicator based on Dxy measured the performance of x (Questions 1-4) as a predictor of y (Questions 6-25).

The researcher then grouped results based on similarities in answers, coupling the demographic questions with the Likert-type responses. In using this method, it became clear if there were differences in how schools of different sizes, geographies, endowment levels, and gender focuses experienced the triple threat, any pressures on the model, and, if needed, what manner in which schools were addressing these pressures.

**Qualitative phase.** Interviews were transcribed by a transcription service while coding of the qualitative interviews was carried out via Atlas.ti software. Open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was used to determine patterns in how heads of schools experienced the triple threat as a phenomenon. It is this experience that is most significant in forming a grounded theory due to the high level of contact heads of schools have with all aspects of the triple-threat model. Correlations between quantitative data and open codes further reinforced trends and patterns regarding the triple-threat model. In combining both phases of data collection, a picture emerged as to the sustainability of the triple-threat model from which theory could be developed that was grounded in the data collected.

This study was viewed via a pragmatic approach, as the researcher saw the need only to identify what is impacting individual schools in the sample pool and how they were addressing any pressures to the triple-threat model so he could establish a theory grounded in the data collected. Findings of the study can be extrapolated as needed to other boarding schools as those organizations may see fit. In this sense, heads of non-elite schools can review their staffing model and use the findings presented in this study to form individual action plans that meet the individual needs of their respective schools.

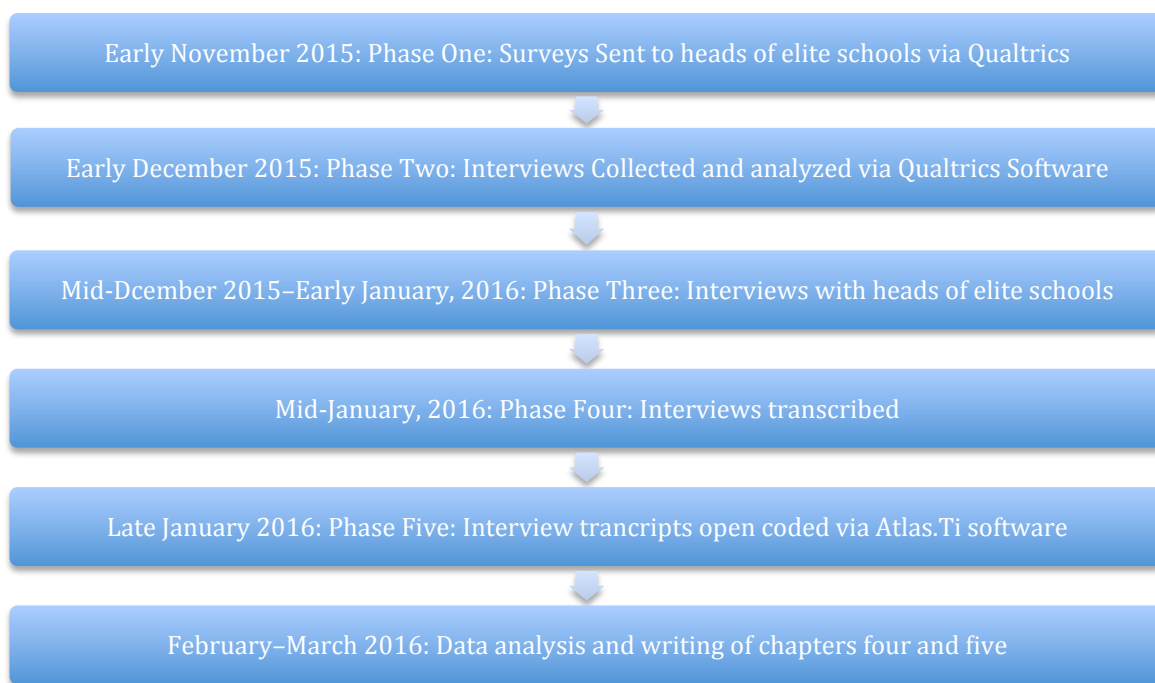
The results of this study can be used to assist all boarding schools in developing a hiring and staffing model that is relevant, appropriate, and sustainable for each individual institution. It may be that the hiring practices employed by elite boarding schools continue to be effective and relevant with regard to the triple-threat model, but this might not hold true for second- and third-tier schools or schools that cater to special populations or programs. Possible, too, is the decline and unsustainability of the triple-threat model based on changing circumstances in elite American boarding schools. Some schools may already be taking action to update their hiring models while some may cling to the more traditional boarding triple-threat model. Even though girls' schools have relied on housemothers as the primary residential care person, they may be drawn to an updated or modified version of the triple threat due to proposed changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act. By viewing the data entirely, a theory could be developed that could then be adapted in specific school settings.

Results of this study will be made available for heads of boarding schools to use as a self-assessment tool within their own organization. With the data made public, heads of school will have a clear picture of what elite boarding schools are doing in terms of hiring and staffing. With this, second- and third-tier schools can identify situations and responses that address their own needs and put in place these practices in their own organizations, all the while being able to individualize to meet their needs. In addition, independent day schools could utilize this data in their staffing, as many day schools utilize a double-threat model of teacher and coach (NAIS, 2014).

Reliability of results is strong due to the targeted focus of the survey instrument on 28 elite schools and the use of closed-ended questions. Interview questions also had a



high validity due to their design and focus on the phenomenon as experienced by the heads of school being interviewed. One issue that may have called the results of this study into question was the possibility of receiving survey results from less than 30% of schools on the list or fewer than five interviews with heads of elite schools. This scenario did not occur, with a response rate of 46% and six interviews conducted.



*Figure 2. Stages of data collection.*

This study took two months to complete. Some of the timetable for the study was sensitive to the rhythms and schedules of elite boarding schools regarding breaks and overarching yearly schedules. Expecting surveys to be completed or interviews conducted during breaks was unreasonable, as schools close. This was especially true of the period between mid-November and the end of the first week in January. Most elite

schools have a 10-day break at Thanksgiving and then return for a brief period of no more than 21 days before taking winter break. With this in mind, it was important for surveys to be completed before winter break. Survey analysis was carried out as surveys were returned.

Interviews were more flexible with regard to schedule, as they could be conducted anytime and anywhere given Skype and Zoom video chatting. Interview transcription by Landmark Transcription Service took two to three weeks in total, with interviews sent to them immediately after being conducted. Once interviews were transcribed, Atlas.Ti open coding took minimal time due to the robust nature of the software. Hand coding was also used to supplement Atlas.Ti.

With data collected by January, the final phase consisted of pulling the quantitative and qualitative portions together within Chapter 4 of the dissertation in the form of charts, graphs, and a codebook. Chapter 5 was written by February 2016, with editing completed in early March. The dissertation defense took place March 28, 2016.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher could not identify any known or anticipated ethical considerations pertaining to this study. Subjects' identities were protected throughout both the quantitative and qualitative phases. Subjects were the heads of their institutions and had the authority to speak on the triple threat. Subjects were offered the option to choose to end their participation at any time without consequence. Surveys were sent to heads of school at identified institutions via a secure email link. No personal data were collected in the first phase of the study. Survey results did not contain any identifying markers. Interviews were stored securely and pseudonyms were substituted for the actual names of

both heads of schools and the institutions they represented. Participation in both phases of the study was completely voluntary. The identities of heads of schools interviewed are protected and these people are identified throughout the study via pseudonyms. Names of their schools were withheld or changed to protect these institutions.

### **Summary**

This study focusing on the sustainability of the triple-threat model in elite American boarding schools was carried out as an explanatory sequential mixed method study based on grounded theory principles (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The study was carried out in two phases, the first as quantitative surveys and the second as qualitative interviews based on phenomenology. Qualtrics and SPSS were used to analyze survey data with Atlas.ti being used to open code interview transcriptions. Results of this study determined if the triple-threat model is indeed under pressure and if it is sustainable in the coming years without altering it in some way. Once complete, the study can be replicated on non-elite boarding schools as a tool for schools, consultants, and search firms to determine the best staffing model for a given schools and to show the different iterations and versions of the triple threat that will allow the model to continue.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Results

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed method study was to develop a grounded theory to address the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model of teachers in elite American boarding schools. In doing so, the following questions were addressed.

1. How are elite American boarding schools currently utilizing the triple-threat model?
2. What kind of pressures exists in hiring for the triple-threat teacher, and are these pressures forcing a shift away from the model?
3. How are schools addressing possible pressures on the triple-threat model via staffing modifications and creativity in modifying hiring practices?
4. What is the future of the triple-threat model?

In Phase 1, heads of the 28 schools defined as “elite” were asked to complete a questionnaire containing both closed and Likert-type scale questions regarding their experiences with the triple threat and views regarding its sustainability. Qualtrics delivered questionnaires via secure email. Thirteen heads of school completed the questionnaire, giving an overall response rate of 46%. A Somers’ D test was used to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables in the Likert-type scale questions. Descriptive statistics (Creswell, 2009) were used to identify patterns. Measures of central tendency based on mean and standard deviation were calculated via the use of ordinal data.

The second phase of this study included interviews built around the following questions:

- In what ways have you seen hiring for the triple-threat model change during your time as head of school?
- In what ways is the triple threat successful at your school?
- How do you envision the triple threat in the future?
- With myriad changes facing schools, what changes are you seeing with regard to staffing and in what ways does that shift away from or reinforce the triple threat?

Additional questions were developed from the responses given by interviewees in order to fully explore the experiences of heads of schools as they pertained to the phenomenon of the triple threat. Six heads of schools agreed to be interviewed for this phase of the study. Interviewees provided a broad cross-section of the schools in the sample pool, with interviewees being drawn from all-girls schools, all-boys schools, and schools in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, or West Coast regions. In short, each type of school in the overall sample pool of 28 was represented. Four interviews were conducted via phone and two were conducted via Zoom. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed by Landmark Transcription Services. Open coding was carried out via Atlas.Ti.

### **Study Subjects**

Subjects in this study were all long-time educators with an average of 28 years in independent schools. Of the 13 heads that responded to the questionnaire, 11 were males and two female. All held at least a masters degree in an academic field, with Harvard and Middlebury being the schools most represented. One head, a male, held a Ph.D. in

history from the University of Texas at Austin and one head, also a male, held a JD from Harvard. All 13 heads had spent the vast majority of their careers in the boarding school world. Ten of the 13 heads were graduates of boarding schools with the other three being graduates of independent day schools. The average age of these heads of schools was 55, making them potentially within a decade of retirement, yet still having the need to view the triple-threat model with attention to its long-term use. Heads of school who participated in the qualitative portion of this study represent a broad range of schools from the sample pool. Subjects involved represent schools with profiles as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

*Qualitative Subjects*

| Subject | Location   | Size              | Approximate Endowment | Region       | Student Body |
|---------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| #1      | Rural      | Approximately 400 | \$235 million         | Southeast    | All-Boys     |
| #2      | Rural      | Approximately 650 | \$135 million         | Northeast    | Coed         |
| #3      | Small Town | Approximately 500 | \$150 million         | Mid-Atlantic | Coed         |
| #4      | Small City | Approximately 350 | \$100 million         | Mid-Atlantic | All-Girls    |
| #5      | Rural      | Approximately 250 | \$140 million         | West Coast   | Coed         |
| #6      | Small Town | Approximately 500 | \$350 million         | Mid Atlantic | Coed         |

## Findings

### Quantitative

**Use of the triple-threat model.** With a response rate of 46%, the results contained in Phase 1 are statistically valid and offer significant data from which to

generate a grounded theory. Of the 13 respondents, 11 utilized the triple-threat model (84.6%). The outliers can be explained by the presence of two all-girls schools in the sample and their use of a “housemother” system as opposed to the triple threat. With 84.6% of responses stating that the triple threat is used at least “often,” data suggest that the triple-threat model continues to be the dominant staffing model in elite boarding schools.

The response of “often” stood out as being significant since only one school responded as using the model “all of the time.” As indicated in interviews, few schools hold all faculty members to the traditional triple threat. In most school situations, some senior faculty members are offered a reduction in coaching responsibility or dorm oversight as an acknowledgment of service to the school or, more pragmatically, the change in the ability of good faculty members to continue with the triple-threat workload. Interviews shed more light on these responses and offered a clear picture of the manner in which the model is currently being used, even if not all of the time (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Use of the Triple Threat Model*

|       |       | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | All   | 1         | 7.7     | 7.7           | 7.7                |
|       | Often | 10        | 76.9    | 76.9          | 84.6               |
|       | Never | 2         | 15.4    | 15.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total | 13        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Among all respondents, there was overwhelming agreement that the triple-threat model is under pressure with regard to its sustainability (see Table 6). With this consensus in mind, what these pressures are and how schools are addressing said pressures become paramount to the sustainability of the triple threat. One outlier does exist in this response. The outlier in this response is an all boys school whose location and mission statement deeply tie it to the triple-threat model. This was illuminated during the interview with the head of school as part of the qualitative phase of this study. With a clear view that the model is under pressure, data defining what the pressures are continue to frame the overarching question as to the sustainability of the model. With respondents representing a broad representation of the survey pool, the reality of pressure on the model appears nearly universal. When viewed via results from using Somers' D, the correlation between schools that use the triple-threat model and view it as under pressure is high, with  $v = .313$  and  $p = .261$  given two schools that responded use the model "never" (see Table 6). While a weak positive correlation, this relationship is more significant when viewed with "never" responses removed. Of schools that use the model, only one respondent was affirmative in their belief that the model was unsustainable.



Table 6

*Directional Measure: Model Use and Pressure*

|           |   | Value | Asymptotic<br>Standard Error <sup>a</sup> | Approximate T <sup>b</sup> | Approx.<br>Sig |
|-----------|---|-------|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| Somers' D | Symmetric   | .313  | .234                                      | 1.123                      | .261           |
|           | My school utilizes the triple-threat (teacher/coach/residential duty) model of teacher. Dependent | .313  | .249                                      | 1.123                      | .261           |
|           | The triple-threat is under pressure with regard to sustainability of the model. Dependent         | .313  | .249                                      | 1.123                      | .261           |

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 7

*Triple Threat Under Pressure with Regard to Sustainability*

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid<br>Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|------------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree       | 1         | 7.7     | 7.7              | 7.7                |
|       | Agree          | 10        | 76.9    | 76.9             | 84.6               |
|       | Strongly Agree | 2         | 15.4    | 15.4             | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 13        | 100.0   | 100.0            |                    |

Of great interest is the fact that while 92.3% of respondents indicated (see Table 6) that the triple-threat model is under pressure with regard to sustainability, 75% of respondents indicated that the model is sustainable (see Table 7), and 77% of respondents

indicated that their schools will continue to use the triple-threat model for the foreseeable future (see Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8

*Sustainability of the Triple-Threat Model*

|   |                 | <u>I believe the triple-threat model is a sustainable model.</u> |       |       |       |
|---|-----------------|--|-------|-------|-------|
|   |                 | Strongly   |       |       |       |
|   |                 | Disagree   | Agree | Agree | Total |
| My school utilizes the triple-threat (teacher/coach/residential duty) model of teacher. | All of the Time | 0  | 1     | 0     | 1     |
|   | Often           | 2  | 7     | 1     | 10    |
|   | Never           | 1  | 0     | 0     | 1     |
| Total   |                 | 3  | 8     | 1     | 12    |

Table 9

*Continued Use of the Triple-Threat Model*

|  |                 | My school will continue utilizing the triple-threat model for the foreseeable future. |          |       |                |       |
|--|-----------------|---|----------|-------|----------------|-------|
|  |                 | Strongly  |          |       |                |       |
|  |                 | Disagree  | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
| My school utilizes the triple-threat model | All of the Time | 0   | 0        | 0     | 1              | 1     |
|  | Often           | 0   | 1        | 7     | 2              | 10    |
|  | Never           | 1   | 1        | 0     | 0              | 2     |
| Total                                      |                 | 1   | 2        | 7     | 3              | 13    |

Even though the triple threat was identified as being under pressure, schools continue to use it. The data speak to the importance of the model within the culture of elite boarding schools and the pragmatic reality that the triple-threat model fits the needs of schools and replacing it does not appear to be something schools in this study will, or possibly can, do.

Likewise, schools in the study that use the houseparent model appear confident that they will continue their use of that model and not shift to the triple threat. There is some indication that potential changes to FLSA laws may force a shift on the part of these schools due to the proposed raising of the salary threshold for exemption to nearly \$51K per year and the fact that houseparents are not exempt based on the duties test (see Table 10). However, based on both questionnaire responses and interviews, most heads of schools are unaware of these proposed changes. This topic is explored further in the qualitative findings.

Table 10

*FLSA Changes in the Triple Threat*

|  |                 | The recent changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act reinforce use of the triple-threat model. |       |  |       |
|--|-----------------|--|-------|--|-------|
|  |                 | I am unaware of FLSA changes   |       |  | Total |
|  |                 | Disagree   | Agree |  |       |
| My school utilizes the triple-threat model | All of the Time | 0  | 0     |  | 1     |
|  | Often           | 3  | 1     |  | 6     |
|  | Never           | 0  | 0     |  | 1     |
| Total                                      |                 | 3  | 1     |  | 8     |

**Parental pressures.** Pressure on the triple-threat model comes from three specific situations the data illuminate (see Table 11). Parental expectations for experts in academics and athletics were identified as a major pressure on the model. In this, parental desire to have classes taught by subject-area experts and athletic teams coached by those with Division I or professional playing experience is limiting the pool of potential triple-threat teachers. Some of this desire can be attributed specifically to the need for a justification for the high cost of an elite boarding school education, keeping in mind that even non-elite schools have similar tuition levels. Additionally, a more competitive admissions market at select colleges and universities may be influencing parental pressure for academic experts to ready children for their entry into highly selective colleges and universities. This relationship is explored further in the qualitative results since it serves to inform the development of a grounded theory as to how schools are responding to parental pressure.

Table 11

*Parental Pressure for Experts in Academic Subjects*

|       |                | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree       | 3         | 23.1    | 23.1          | 23.1               |
|       | Agree          | 8         | 61.5    | 61.5          | 84.6               |
|       | Strongly Agree | 2         | 15.4    | 15.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 13        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

As with earlier responses, outliers did exist, with their presence explained during interviews with heads of school. Again, these outliers were single-sex schools. Keeping

in mind the three-pronged nature of the triple-threat model, recruiting experts in academic fields does not necessarily fill the needs in the other areas of school life such as coaching, the arts, or in residential life. As such, the hiring of an academic expert may detract from other areas of school life due to a narrow focus.

In response to the question regarding the pressure from parents to hire expert level coaches athletics, a high response rate agreed that this was indeed a significant pressure in hiring triple-threat faculty. With an increased focus on single sports within American culture, the desire on the part of parents to have their child's athletic future guided by a former high-level player is present in the responses.

As pointed out in the qualitative phase of this study, coaches have taken on a great role in the college admissions process from the standpoint of advocating for students they have coached and acting as liaison between the boarding school and college or university. This may account for some of the increase in desire for expert level coaches who know the college system and coaches on that level and have a familiarity with NCAA rules and practices. Even if schools do hire coaches with high-level playing or coaching backgrounds, as with academic experts, this does not mean they will fit the needs of the school in other areas that define the triple-threat model (see Table 12).

Table 12

*Parental Pressure for Expert Coaches*

|       |                | Freq | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree       | 2    | 15.4    | 15.4          | 15.4               |
|       | Agree          | 9    | 69.2    | 69.2          | 84.6               |
|       | Strongly Agree | 2    | 15.4    | 15.4          | 100.0              |
|       | Total          | 13   | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Absent from the parental pressures identified as impacting hiring triple-threat faculty was that of a focus on residential life, with 69% of respondents not seeing pressure from parents for a focused residential life curriculum (see Table 13). This outcome was unexpected, as elite schools publicize their residential life programs, and a significant number of labor hours are spent by triple-threat faculty in residential oversight of dorms and on weekend duty. With this in mind, residence halls play a large part in the life of elite boarding schools and the long-held view of triple-threat teachers as “in loco parentis” seems to reinforce the notion that residential life is important. This may be true within schools; however, externally it is not. Based on the data provided from questionnaire responses, parental expectations for a focused residential life curriculum are not significant and therefore not impacting the hiring of triple-threat faculty at schools that use the model.

Table 13

*Parental Pressure for a Focused Residential Life Curriculum*

|  |                 | <u>Parental expectations for focused residential<br/>life curriculum is impacting hiring triple-threat.</u> |          |       |       |       |
|--|-----------------|---|----------|-------|-------|-------|
|  |                 | Strongly  |          |       |       |       |
|  |                 | Strongly Disagree   | Disagree | Agree | Agree | Total |
| My school<br>utilizes the<br>triple-threat<br>(teacher/coach<br>/residential<br>duty) model of<br>teacher. | All of the Time | 0   | 1        | 0     | 0     | 1     |
|  | Often           | 2   | 6        | 2     | 0     | 10    |
|  | Never           |   |          |       |       |       |
|  |                 | 0   | 0        | 1     | 1     | 2     |
| Total  |                 | 2   | 7        | 3     | 1     | 13    |

**Work/Life balance pressure.** As identified in conversations leading to the construction of the survey instrument, changes in views towards work/life balance on the part of prospective teaching candidates at schools that utilize the triple-threat model was identified as a pressure the model is facing. Explained more fully in the qualitative data, results from the questionnaire point to this shift as being a significant challenge for schools in hiring triple-threat teachers. Of note, this change in attitude appears general and not specific to an age group.

The question illustrated by Table 14 was designed to identify changes in attitude overall when hiring triple-threat faculty. Responses were further explained during interviews that supported the overall trend of a change in attitude. Given the long workweeks of the triple threat and increased demands on educators and families, the desire for “down time” or balance has become more pronounced. This may impact rural

schools more, as indicated in some of the qualitative data, since life at these schools is more isolated and affords fewer opportunities for a life outside the campus community.

Table 14

*Changes in Work/Life Balance*

|               |                 | Changes in expectations regarding work/life<br>balance by prospective candidates are<br>impacting hiring |       |                   |       |
|---------------|-----------------|--|-------|-------------------|-------|
|               |                 | Disagree   | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree | Total |
| My school     | All of the Time | 0  | 1     | 0                 | 1     |
| utilizes the  | Often           | 2  | 5     | 3                 | 10    |
| triple-threat | Never           | 0  | 1     | 1                 | 2     |
| Total         |                 | 2  | 7     | 4                 | 13    |

**Relationships between dependent and independent variables.** As indicated in Chapter 3 of this study, the researcher designed the questionnaire to find patterns regarding the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model and the size, location, and endowment, of elite schools. In carrying out Somers' D tests between independent (Questions 1-4) and dependent (Questions 5-24) responses, no statistically significant correlation was found between school size, location, or endowment dollars per student and their views toward the use of, pressure on, or future of the triple-threat model with  $p = > .0005$  in each test. Correlation between schools' responses for geographic location and use of the triple threat was not demonstrated, with  $p = .751$  and  $v = .091$  (see Table 15). Worth noting is the fact that the response indicating an urban school and the lack of the triple threat could be due to greater access to both adjunct teachers and coaches and



the presence of a great amount of off-campus housing choices. This scenario was addressed further in Phase 2 of this study. Additional Somers' D tests regarding size of school/endowment and their views regarding the pressure on the model showed clear consensus that the model is under pressure with only one dissenting response (see Tables 16 and 17).

Table 15

*School Location and Pressure on the Triple Threat*

| Ordinal | Somers' d |                 | Value | Asymptotic<br>Standardized<br>Error <sup>a</sup> | Approximate<br>T <sup>b</sup> | Approx<br>Signific. |
|---------|-----------|-----------------|-------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------|
|         |           |                 |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | Symmetric       | .105  | .328   | .317                          | .751                |
|         |           | My school is    |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | located in the  |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | following type  | .125  | .387   | .317                          | .751                |
|         |           | of area:        |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | Dependent       |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | The triple-     |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | threat is under |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | pressure with   |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | regard to       | .091  | .286   | .317                          | .751                |
|         |           | sustainability  |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | of the model.   |       |  |                               |                     |
|         |           | Dependent       |       |  |                               |                     |

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 16

*Size of School and Pressure on the Triple-Threat Model*

|   |                     | The triple-threat is under pressure with regard to sustainability of the model. |       |          |       |
|---|---------------------|---|-------|----------|-------|
|   |                     |   |       | Strongly |       |
|   |                     | Disagree  | Agree | Agree    | Total |
| The number of students at my school is: | Between 250 and 350 | 0   | 1     | 1        | 2     |
|   | Between 350 and 500 | 1   | 6     | 0        | 7     |
|   | Greater than 500    | 0   | 3     | 1        | 4     |
| Total                                   |                     | 1   | 10    | 2        | 13    |

Table 17

*Endowment Dollars Per Student and Belief the Triple Threat is Sustainable*

|   |                       | I believe the triple-threat model is a sustainable model. |       |                |       |
|---|-----------------------|---|-------|----------------|-------|
|   |                       | Disagree  | Agree | Strongly Agree | Total |
| My school has an endowment of approximately _____dollars per student: | Less than \$250k      | 1   | 2     | 0              | 3     |
|   | More than \$500k      | 1   | 1     | 1              | 3     |
|   | More than \$2 million | 1   | 5     | 0              | 6     |
|   | Total                 | 3   | 8     | 1              | 12    |

**Sustainability of the model.** Of note among responses is the fact that even though heads of schools recognized that the model is under pressure, they overwhelmingly saw the model as sustainable with  $r = -.476$  (see Table 18). While there is no correlation between this response and the dependent variables, the independent nature and needs of each school may play a role in this response.

Table 18

*Use of the Triple-Threat Model and Sustainability*

|  |   | Value | Asymptotic<br>Standardized<br>Error <sup>a</sup> | Approximate<br>T <sup>b</sup> | Approximate<br>Significance |
|--|---|-------|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  |   |       |  |                               |                             |
| Ordinal by Ordinal   | Symmetric   | -.357 | .204   | -1.284                        | .199                        |
|  | My school utilizes the triple-threat (teacher/coach/residential duty) model of teacher. Dependent | -.286 | .216   | -1.284                        | .199                        |
|  | I believe the triple-threat model is a sustainable model. Dependent                               | -.476 | .241   | -1.284                        | .199                        |
| a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.                                 |   |       |  |                               |                             |
| b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis. |   |       |  |                               |                             |

**Summary of Quantitative Data**

The quantitative segment of this study provided data supporting the following conclusions:

1. The triple-threat model is under pressure.
2. Parental expectations for experts in subject area content are a pressure on the model.
3. Parental expectations for expert level coaches are a pressure on the model.
4. Changes in views regarding work/life balance are a pressure on the model.

5. Parental expectations for a dedicated residential life curriculum is not a pressure.
6. Independent variables (size, location, and endowment) are not a factor in other responses.
7. Even with the pressures on the model, heads of school overwhelmingly think it is sustainable.

The main discrepancy in data is the apparent disconnect between recognizing the model is under pressure and the view that it is sustainable. Based on the former, one might conclude that heads of schools would call the sustainability of the model into question. This, however, was not the case. As the qualitative segment of this study will show, this duality is explainable based on the individual circumstances of the individual schools.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Six heads of school that completed the quantitative phase of this study were subjects for the qualitative phase of this study. The interviews were carried out over a 10-day span prior to winter break in a semi-structured format via phone or Zoom. Interviews were transcribed using Landmark Transcription Services and then coded via Atlas.Ti using open coding methods to identify emerging themes. The researcher used margin notes to identify significant differences in answers as well as to make note of any unique information given as part of a response.

Of significance is the fact that interview subjects represented each type of school present in the study. One head was interviewed from an all-boys schools in the South. One head was interviewed from an all-girls school in the northeast. Two heads were

interviewed from co-ed schools in the mid-Atlantic. The final two interviews were with heads of school in New England and on the West Coast, respectively. In each interview, heads of school were asked questions regarding their experience with the triple-threat model, how their respective school used the model, what changes they were experiencing with regard to the triple-threat model, and what they saw as the possible future of the model in Elite American boarding schools.

Emerging from the interviews were the themes (see Table 19). In each interview, the themes arose on multiple occasions throughout. The manner in which these themes appear reflects the independent nature of the way elite American boarding schools run, as each head interviewed gave fairly unique answers within a common theme. As stated in Phase 1, a general consensus is present within each theme, with one respondent seeing the model as less under pressure. However, the manner in which the themes manifested themselves at each school varies from slightly to a great deal. This occurrence is understandable given the fact that each school participating in the qualitative study is somewhat unique from every other.

Table 19

*Interview Themes*

| <b>Emerging Themes</b>             | <b>Number of Occurrences</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Challenges to the Triple-Threat    | 93                           |
| School Culture/Mission             | 35                           |
| Sustainability/Future of the model | 27                           |
| Changes to the Triple-Threat       | 22                           |

As a result of the varied nature of the interview responses, each interview is presented as a narrative that is reflective of the school being represented. Within this, emergent themes are addressed in the context of the interview being conducted.

**Interview one.** The subject of this interview is the head of school at an all-boys school located in the South. This head has been associated with the school for over 20 years in various roles as a teacher, dorm parent, and coach. After leaving in 2000 to pursue other opportunities, subject one returned as Head of School in 2014. The school is in a rural setting, with little off-campus housing or local population from which to draw adjunct coaches or teachers. The school embraces the triple threat wholeheartedly and the model is deeply tied to the mission statement of the school. The school is mid-sized, with a population of approximately 400 students. Financially, the school has a large endowment that nears \$250 million.

Consistent with the quantitative data and other interviews was the view regarding the theme of “challenges” to the model. As stated by subject one:

What I think has changed is that it can be more challenging and difficult to hire for the triple-threat model, and it can be maybe a little bit more challenging to expect veteran faculty to remain as committed to the model as their careers progress.

This acknowledgement that the model is becoming more challenging to hire for was clear. What stood out in contrast was the fact that at this particular school, the head of school was not seeing it as more difficult at this particular institution. As stated by subject one, “In terms of <Place>’s commitment to the model, it is as strong now as it ever has been.” In addition, subject one, while identifying an overarching shift in the way potential hires see work life balance, does not see it negatively impacting the hiring

of Millennials. According to subject one, “Several of our youngest faculty here are right out of college and serving as interns right now. They are eating the place up. They are pressing us to keep them on for another year.”

While recognizing that the overall model is harder to hire for, this subject was not finding it more difficult to hire strong triple-threat teachers even though the subject did point out that the hiring pool was smaller than the school would like to see. In this sense, subject one was clear that making the triple-threat model a priority did impact the size of the hiring pool, but not the quality of the people hired, nor their commitment to the triple threat. In addition, subject one had no knowledge regarding the possible impacts of proposed FLSA changes, stating, “That’s one of a jillion areas of life that I’m totally ignorant of.” This response is consistent with the quantitative data.

I mean I think we are a pretty self-selecting school in terms of our model. It’s pretty clear from the outset what our model is, and so we lose a lot of perspective candidates from the very beginning based on the fact that they may not be up for that lifestyle. They also may not be up for <Place>’s location which is very rural compared to some schools. It’s a little bit difficult perhaps to identify exactly what the problems are there with our applicant pool.

As stated above, the location of the school is identified as a possible challenge to hiring triple-threat teachers, yet as subject one went on to elaborate:

We’re pretty committed to the model and it continues to work pretty well for us. What I’m saying is that it probably limits our applicant pool in the front end, but I don’t really see a lot of shifting and compromising and abandonment of the model once somebody’s on board here.

Clear in subject one’s responses is the indication that the school’s location may be a challenge when hiring triple-threat teachers. With a rural location, the school truly becomes the “total institution,” and faculty members young and old socialize and work together. This can be challenging, especially for young single male triple-threat

educators since the faculty at this school are overwhelmingly male and living in a fairly isolated male community will not appeal to everyone. As stated by subject one:

I think that <Place>'s location is a double-edged sword. I mean it may turn some perspective candidates off. It's also very appealing to others. It's a hard one to measure. On balance, it probably hurts us in the early stages of creating a pool. It probably helps us in the latter stages when it comes to making a selection and landing an offer.

As a respondent with a different experience with regard to identifying parental demands as a pressure on the triple-threat model, subject one was clear as to why they are not seeing parental pressure as a stress on the triple-threat model.

I really don't get that pressure from parents. I think that parents generally know I'm not endorsing a firm sport and favor a strong and competitive athletic program, but I think that what they want more—what they think about more is the whole experience of their sons, which includes athletics but is not really the kind of specialized instruction that many parents expect in a day school.

Adding to that experience, the subject noted the same occurrence when dealing with pressure from parents for content areas experts. In response, subject one stated:

I'm really not. I think that pressure probably comes—that's pressure's probably more internally driven than externally driven in terms of wanting our boys to be as competitive as they can be. No, I don't get a lot of pressure on specialists.

School culture and mission play a large role in the use and future use of the triple-threat, according to subject one. As stated:

I think that the triple threat model is grounded in a belief that the faculty matter and that the relationships that faculty have with students in the classroom, on dorm, and then the world of the arts and athletics, that those relationships matter and that they are so much more substantive and deep when they are holistic and not isolated to one experience or two.

With this view in mind, it is clear that the culture of subject one's school is deeply tied to the triple threat, and shifting away from it, even in the presence of a more



challenging applicant pool, is not something the school's culture will allow for. As subject one went on to reveal:

I think that once you explicitly back off of that (the triple-threat) I think it can be really difficult to restore. What I worry about is that when you vulcanize the faculty experience you vulcanize the student experience and you lose the culture of the whole place and the meaning of the whole place.

It is this sense of culture and "place" that resonates throughout the interview with subject one as well as in the other interviews in this phase of the study. With subject one's dedication to and belief in the model, little change in the triple threat is occurring at this institution. Reinforcing the complexity of the triple threat's sustainability is the unique needs, mission, and culture of schools. While subject one identifies that hiring for the triple threat is becoming more challenging from an applicant standpoint, subject one's school is steadfast in its commitment to the model.

I don't know that the triple threat is sustainable indefinitely, but I can tell you from my vantage point here that while we may struggle with the applicant pool to get a pool of deep as we would want, we are hiring people that we're delighted to hire. Once we hire them, the challenge is in some ways not enough turnover rather than too much.

**Interview two.** The subject of this interview is the head of school at a New England school with a student population of nearly 700. The head has spent 30 years in the boarding school world as a teacher, coach, dorm parent, and administrator. He has been head for three years. The school is financially well off, with an endowment over \$100 million. Located in a rural area, the school has a long history as a respected institution. This subject posed a good foil to subject one, as the school is modifying the use of the triple threat and the head is clear in his belief that the model is unsustainable.

Subject two went to great lengths to describe the changes they have seen to the model in the past 30 years. This was a useful narrative, as it gave a longitudinal view of the trajectory of the triple-threat model. As subject two pointed out:

In the dorms and in the classroom, I think so much more is expected of our teachers, of our residential faculty members, and of our coaches, so when more is expected from each of them, we're asking for a little more expertise in each of those areas. I just think it's too much to get that on a good day for all of those positions.

With the increase in overall expectations, subject two elaborated further on what the pressures are in their experience and how these pressures increase the demands on hiring exceptional educators. As subject two elaborated:

Frankly, it's not just sports. Being a fabulous violinist or an amazing dancer, or having that particular hook. Then has driven, well, who are the adults that are responsible for those arenas? Even when I first started out, everybody was perfectly happy with just a high school basketball player coaching the basketball team. No freaking way! I mean, the idea, just the other day as I left our basketball gym, I was thinking, "I can't believe they let me coach basketball!" I had no business, but no way today! No way today would I hire me to coach our JV basketball team, and that's—so it's all those things put together sort of funnels down to the adults that we're hiring, and the higher expectations, not just from parents and not just from colleges, not just from the athletes themselves.

As identified, the higher expectations put greater demand on the educators hired.

Determining who is a qualified teaching candidate has become more challenging as the demands have increased. With the increased demands, subject two has modified the approach of the school to better address these demands.

With a conscious shift away from the triple-threat model, subject two stood as an outlier in the sense of actively addressing the pressures and demands by moving away from the traditional model. In doing so, subject two is purposeful in lessening the burden of the triple threat in order to allow people to excel in one or two areas. Additionally,

being creative with regard to staffing is a clear practice of subject two. As subject two states in response to my question regarding hiring:

We're doing what a lot of schools are doing which is we're going for the double threat sometimes or we're making—we'll fill some staff positions with a coach or maybe we'll have an adjunct take on a class section because we don't wanna overburden somebody that we've hired because they're really good as a residential faculty member, and they're bringing all kinds of great strengths to the dorm, but, eh. We don't want them to teaching 40 kids. We're okay with them teaching 15.

Consciously shifting away from the model, while potentially positive for students and faculty, does have an impact on the school. As subject two noted:

I think we're making adjustments. Now, what that means is it's more expensive. I was cheap. Man, I was a bargain, and I think I and a lot of my colleagues were bargains, but particularly when we're hiring mid career people, we're not asking them to do the whole shebang. We're making adjustments in terms of our own expectations.

In lessening the burden on educators by reducing duties, numbers of students taught, or seasons coached, more employees are needed to meet the needs of the institution. While possible for subject two's school to do, this would not be the case for all schools, nor, as with subject one, would their school culture allow it. Subject two elaborated on this further, noting the historical impact of the triple-threat model and what it has been for the last 75 years. Of note is the pressure brought on in both modifying the model and trying to diversify the faculty population.

The other piece here is the triple threat model is a 1950s white male model. It just is. That's what our schools were, so guess who always was really qualified for those and still are really qualified for those positions? So in our attempt to have a faculty that is more reflective of the kinds of students that I hope we all want in our schools, well, we also have to acknowledge that there are gonna be fewer people out there in particular groups that haven't gone through that 75 or 100 years of that model. I think what it boils down to, unfortunately, is it's creating some equity issues amongst our schools, the schools that can afford to either really go out and create the heck out of those superstars wherever or whoever they

are. We're the ones that can afford the diffused workload with a bigger faculty and staff are the really wealthy, highly endowed schools.

In this, wealth of school very much impacts the possibility of modifying the triple-threat model or moving away from it all together.

In answering the question as to the sustainability of the triple-threat model, subject two was direct and succinct in stating, "I think that model is heading toward extinction except for the schools that can really afford it." Others have echoed this sentiment in this study, however, not by a sitting head of school. It may well be that this particular subject's school is actively moving away from the model out of both need and a conscious effort to do so. As subject two stated, much of a school's ability to shift or adjust the model stems from a combination of wealth and location. With this in mind, individual schools are bound by factors over which they may have little control. This is fully explained by subject two in the following statement:

The faculty member in boarding schools, particularly big boarding schools has a lot to do with whether you have housing for them, and it not only has to do with whether you have housing for them, but are you in a metropolitan area where it's easy to find affordable housing to make \$50,000.00 a year and live off campus? Where we are, in the middle of nowhere, one, it's a challenge to even find decent housing. If you do find it, it's cheap, but it takes a particular person to want to live in a second floor 1700s farmhouse in Gill, Massachusetts. It's usually not a triple-threat person coming out of Vassar or coming out of Amherst or Williams, but, yeah, you're right. That's a real issue for us and going back to what so many of our schools are doing. You're seeing more and more coaches residing in admission's offices and college counseling offices both in terms of how to facilitate bringing the kids in and how to facilitate getting them into colleges where they can play ball. You're seeing a lot of coaches in admissions, and they're not necessarily faculty. I mean, they're coaching, but they're not really seen, I think, by many of our schools as faculty members.

In response to the potential impact FLSA may have on the triple-threat model, subject two responded, "I'm not familiar with it. I haven't been paying attention."

**Subject three.** Subject three is head of school at a coed school in the mid-Atlantic with a student population of around 500. The school is in a small town with a depressed economy. With an endowment over \$150 million, subject three's school has the financial means to be flexible with staffing and does so as a matter of policy. Subject three has been involved in boarding schools for nearly 20 years, as a faculty member and administrator. Of note, subject three stated at the outset of the interview, "I've seen variations of a triple-threat model at, I think, every different school that I've been at. Each of them, I think, has different consolations for it and also how to deal with these realities." This statement encapsulates what became clear in each of the other interviews; each school lives the triple-threat model differently based on the unique circumstances of the individual school.

With regard to stress on the model, subject three was clear that the model is seeing an increase on what is expected. However, subject three raised an interesting opinion that the model may have always been under pressure.

I think, generally, overall, I've seen greater expectations placed on each element of the so-called triple threat so that parents expect dedicated dorm parents. It's not just parental. It's also, I think, it's the student issues themselves that require really more time and more intentionality. I think you could say that across the board as coaches and also as teachers. I will say my near 20 years now; I think the triple threat model has in some ways always been under pressure.

Subject three's school utilizes the triple-threat model with some measure of flexibility, realizing the potential limitations and stresses. In doing so, certain expectations exist for the job, yet beyond that, individuals add or subtract duty based on their areas of expertise or the needs of the school in a specific year. Subject three went on to explain:

The model here at my current school is one in which there's a big expectation of residential participation, but not necessarily the triple threat part of that of being a dorm parent. A two-season expectation, and then a regular course load for class of four courses. What's extra, then, it's layered on top of that. It's the dorm parent. What we do here is we pay a stipend for that.

Of note is subject three's view that even this is a stress on the model. Subject three sees the addition of duties and the rise in what is expected as a teacher and coach as being a stress on the model. According to subject three:

I think that the things that have been added over—just in my time, I think teaching has, in our schools, is moving—I'm an advocate of this. Moving from an amateur model to a real professional model that comes with professional development, knowledge of best practices, trying new things in the classroom, with being innovative in your pedagogies. All that's extra that hadn't been done in the past.

The addition of responsibilities and rise in expectations is also seen in athletics, according to subject three.

Coaching. What I'm seeing now in coaching is a recruiting pressure where—we're taking this—I think it's already out there. In other words, coaches are now, informally, part of our admissions office. Coaches can bring in great kids to our schools. They're helping that admissions hall.

This additional expectation adds to the complexities of hiring. As subject three stated, "Trying to find that is tough. That just takes your [hiring] pool, which is already a limited pool, and then you've just really narrowed that pool."

In addressing the sustainability and future of the model, subject three was detailed in his response. When asked where he saw the model going in the next three to five years, subject three responded:

I think if I had—I think we're gonna have a hybrid sort of faculty. Where's that hybrid? Where's that percentage going to be? I think we'll have—yeah. I think we'll always have triple threats who are, sort of, JV level coaches or assistants. I think the experts that were—I think we'll be pressured into finding. I just think we're gonna have to be flexible. Finding that kind of flexibility, we're gonna

need the triple threat. It's just because it's harder, we're gonna have to be really creative and flexible. The other thing is I think to the extent of we can—we have to be sensitive to what we're adding and if we can almost formulaically, either we add things recognize that extra pay stipends only go so far. I think we also need to reduce areas of triple threat. I think the model in my previous school was—has a lot of potential to it.

As subject three suggested, a modification to the triple threat may make the model more sustainable, even as he sees the model as necessary. It is this flexibility that may allow the model to continue under shifting circumstances. Unlike subject one and subject two, this subject is aware of potential changes to FLSA regulations that may impact the triple-threat model. “Our human resources person is totally on this. She's like ‘Oh yeah, were talking about this.’” Given that this particular school is already modifying the triple-threat model, it is logical that they need to be more aware since it may impact staffing expenditures and hiring.

**Subject four.** Subject four is a long-serving head of an all-girls school in the Northeast. This school, as most every all-girls school, does not use the triple-threat model as it is found in other schools. Faculty are still expected to teach, coach, and serve in another capacity via weekend coverage or “study hall” supervision, but residential oversight falls to dedicated “House Mothers.” While not triple threat by definition, faculty at this school perform most of the tasks that make up the triple-threat model. Given this, subject four presented a unique view on the model. As described by subject four, this model has benefits and drawbacks.

We probably went before others did to a notion of calling that position in dormitory full-time, so it is called a full-time position. However, and this can be problematic, it's not on the same pay scale as our faculty salary state scale, which is how we've done it. It is a full-time educational position, but on a very different pay scale because we're valuing that work differently, which, of course, can be problematic in the eyes of some.

Of note is the change subject four is seeing in new hires with regard to their views about work/life balance. As subject four stated, “I think we have a new generation of folks who are coming into our industry, and what we are beginning to see to see are folks who are already entering their career with this notion of balance.” This is a marked change from what subject four saw earlier in her time as a head of school.

Twenty years ago, somebody would say, “Great. Send me in, coach, and I will do anything you want me to do, and I will be the coach of the tiddlywinks club and be advisor to school council and teach four classes, and spend six nights at the dorm. I’m there. I’m all over it. I’ll learn what I can.”

With this perceived change, subject four’s approach to hiring took this into account.

Again, this contrasts some of the responses from other subjects in that subject four sees this as a recent shift. Subject four went on to elaborate:

Now we’ve got folks who really are sort of raising the gauntlet, in terms of, are we asking them to do too much? Perhaps it’s the Fair Labor laws that you’re talking about, but I think more it’s a generational piece around how they value their time and how they spend their energy. For example, for us, even though we only—we don’t have a triple-threat school—even though we only have folks do two of the three, we’re finding a tremendous amount of resistance even when we ask that.

Parental pressures are clearly identified by subject four as impacting the hiring model this particular school uses. As subject four stated, “Absolutely, and it happens – we see it in several different ways.” With this school using interns to fill gaps in coverage, subject four elaborated further that increased parental expectations for experts in all areas of school life are impacting this particular school. According to subject four:

The school has, for decades, done service to education and has hired interns who are not necessarily triple threat. In fact, our interns don’t live in the dorm. Our interns are literally getting their Master’s degree from a nearby college as they’re working with us, and they teach two classes. We’re finding parents who don’t even want that as a teacher; the hue and cry of, “Not my tuition dollars, are not paying to teach somebody how to teach.”



While many schools may employ interns, as subjects one and four do, how these interns are used to fill gaps in the staffing model at a particular school impacts how they are viewed. While of benefit to the school in terms of staffing, the value-added component parents may be looking for is not being met so far as parents see it based on subject four's experiences.

When asked where they see the model going in the years to come, both triple threat and the model specific to this school, subject four was detailed in her response.

I think there has to be a real consideration of how we define the load that those folks are carrying. What's also going on at the same time is a movement toward personalizing the education that happens in the classroom. If you could imagine the 1950s and 1960s, the teacher walks into the classroom and teaches four classes of 15 kids. Now the expectation is that each of those 60 kids will have a personalized approach to education, which means that teacher may be being asked to have extra help sessions individually outside the classroom. Now you add to that a three-hour expectation every afternoon, and then some dorm duty, and I do think that we've hit that benchmark that's unattainable. I think they're going to feel as if they're failing somewhere.

While not stating it outright, subject four alluded to the idea that given the pressures from parents and changes regarding work/life balance, the current model may create unrealistic expectations for what elite boarding schools can accomplish. Given the location of this school, flexibility is possible with regard to hiring and housing that is not possible at other schools in this phase of the study. As subject four stated, location and culture are significant factors in how schools address staffing and the triple threat. "Where are they located geographically, what their culture dictates in terms of how they take care of folks. That's another important piece." With a "houseparent" culture and location that allows off-campus housing and an adjunct pool, subject four's school is notable in this study.

Of interest was subject four's response to the potential changes to FLSA.

Aware of potential changes but not of the specifics, subject four offered a unique view. As subject four stated, "They're designated as faculty. They're called residential faculty. That's where I think we may—and we went to that shift in language about a decade ago, because we wanted to professionalize the role." As a result of this response, the researcher contacted the head counsel at NAIS to ask if this designation was in line with FLSA standards, knowing that under the current law, houseparents are exempt due to the salary threshold being exceeded. The answer from NAIS was clear: "No, unless they are really teachers" (D. Wilson, personal communication, December 9, 2015).

**Subject five.** Subject five is the head at a West Coast school of less than 250 students. The school is unique in that it is the only school in the study not on the East Coast. It is financially sound, especially for a school of its size, with an endowment over \$125 million. The head of school has been in the position for over a decade and has been involved in boarding schools for nearly 30 years as a teacher, coach, dorm parent, and administrator.

Subject five sees the triple threat as being under pressure on multiple fronts, stating:

Well, the triple threat model has become increasingly hard to enact, have come to life at a school simply because of the kind of specialization that's taking place now with undergraduate education, with athletics, and with a workforce that is not so used to a broad involvement. It doesn't mean we don't still have triple threats at our school cuz we do. We rely on it. We need to have—in fact, I have quadruple and quintuple threats because I need people who can camp, and coach, and attend formal dinners, and advise, and run dormitories, and do the whole thing, and ride horses for that matter. At this place, we've got a Western program going here. It's a real challenge in hiring. To get the expertise you need in a specific area, and then still fulfill the broad requirements is hard, especially when you have such high parent expectations. They want the advisor to be Sigmund

Freud. They want the football coach to be Vince Lombardi. They want the counselor to be Mother Teresa. It's a tall order.

An added challenge subject five sees is that of hiring with an eye towards diversity. In an overt move to hire more faculty of color, recruiting candidates that meet both the needs of the school and the school's desire to diversify its faculty add another layer of complexity. As subject five elaborated, "I can get these things, by the way, but the other filter on the whole deal is the diversity hiring, which is a critical element in having the role models for the students." This was the first subject in the study to illuminate this as a challenge in hiring triple-threat faculty members even though the quantitative phase of the study showed this to be a pressure.

With regard to modifying or being flexible with the model, subject five sees the Millennial generation as being most impactful on this shift. Unlike other subjects, this head is experiencing the Millennial cohort differently. This may have to do with the location of the school or type of teaching applicants the school attracts based on its mission statement. Additionally, this could simply be subject five's perspective and little more. According to subject five:

Well, the Millennials are used to calling their own shots, having a lot more freedom than you normally get in a traditional boarding school setting. Yeah, the answer is that there is more flexibility. You look at ways to give them enough social time and free time so that they don't get burned out and run out.

Managing the stress levels and needs of faculty speaks to the institutional culture of this school. Since the school is aware of this potential issue, modifications are in place to mitigate any potential impact. Subject five did not elaborate on how this impacts the triple threat at their school; however, based on their program, the model seems to be employed fully. This view is supported based on their response to the researcher's

question regarding whether or not this head is modifying the model. Subject five responded by stating, “The answer is not really. No.”

Consistent with the quantitative data from Phase 1 of this study as well as other interview responses from Phase 2, the question of potential FLSA impacts are not something subject five is aware of. Since subject five’s school fully employs the triple-threat model, these changes would have a minimal impact on staffing at this school. Even so, the lack of knowledge regarding labor law stands out. As subject five stated, “You might have to explain that to me because I’m not familiar with that.”

While subject five acknowledged stress on the model and a need for some measure of flexibility, this head of school sees the triple-threat model as sustainable. Clear there are challenges, subject five supports the quantitative data regarding the future of the model as being a sustainable one. As subject five stated:

Yeah, so the answer is that I do not see boarding schools threatened, nor do I see the triple threat coming to an end. I think there are a lot of people out there who really enjoy the multiple challenges, who like taking on this kind of stuff. I think it would be inaccurate and just not on to say, well, because of these changes, boarding school triple threat is at an end. It’s not. It’s just a question of we’re not actually employing that many people. There are plenty of people out there who can do this work. The trick is finding them.

This statement echoes other responses in this phase of the study in that much of the stress on the model stems from hiring the people that are a “fit” for the school. While more perplexing, this subject sees it as a surmountable challenge.

**Subject six.** Subject six is head of school at a mid-Atlantic coed institution and has been head for three years. Prior to that, subject six had been head of school elsewhere for over a decade. Subject six had been previously employed by their current school from 1986 until 2001 as a teacher, coach, dorm parent, and director of admissions.

As a longtime boarding school educator, subject six offered a great deal of insight into the changes they have seen in the model over the past 30 years. Subject six stated:

I have seen fewer people who—fewer teacher candidates who are interested in giving that much of their professional time to their job. So what changed over the past 30 years is that people are just less willing to do that. Their reasons are good but they haven't—there's a just a change in the culture. They seem to want to work hard, I think they want more time with their families if they have families or they want the time to build a family if they haven't started a family. Or they just want time to do things that aren't related to work that's probably the biggest single thing is they want to do something other than working all the time is what I get and they don't take as much—not as inclined to see in the tons of work we do as providing them with all the creative outlets and the opportunities that they might wish to have.

Clear in this response, and consistent with views put forth by several other subjects, is the change in views towards the value of work/life balance. While not specifically addressing any generational differences, this subject sees the change in a longitudinal sense. When asked by the researcher about generational differences in attitude towards the triple threat, subject six confirmed that the shift is cultural and not specific to an age group. According to subject six:

I don't see it as an age-related thing. I think it is more of a cultural holistic cultural change. I have young teachers who are perfectly—hold all sorts of excitement to live, to work 18 hours a day and be fully immersed and I have 50 year old who might be coming—applying new for a job at <redacted> or who have been at school for a while who have decided, "I'm changing my attitude towards life and have more time for other pursuits than school."

When addressing the impact of parental pressure on the triple-threat model, subject six recognized that this pressure is real although varied depending on circumstances. Subject six explained:

A part of that I think in the last 15 years has been they are aware of how much more attention parents might demand or a certain type of parent and they don't want to put themselves into that situation of having to deal with that kind of parent. Still yes it's changed, there are still people who want to do it and they are

really valuable and it's a goldmine when you find them. They are in an odd way I think the people who are still eager to do it now are even more committed to a higher ed. approach to all aspects of their jobs than 30 years ago. So the silver lining is while they might be harder to find when you find them they are every bit as eager to be that powerful in the students' life possibly on average even more eager to be powerful than they were before.

As with other subjects interviewed, this head of school recognized the challenges in hiring triple-threat educators, yet made it clear that these educators do exist and are more than willing to live the triple-threat lifestyle.

When addressing specific parental pressures, subject six sees the academic realm as being the most relevant. This is especially true when viewed via a value added perspective that most parents take. Subject six described:

I think that generally the lead concern is generally expressed in an academic setting because those are the things that we produce most often, the grades so they are coming out the most so therefore people see them the most. But I think if there's a reason for all this that the most common one is just that our prices are higher and that their, the parents sense of the resilience of their own economies and the opportunities that may come their children's way are smaller and they are always questioning whether or not they made the right decision to spend all this money. That's the undercurrent and it is hard to satisfy that very easily.

The financial considerations of a boarding school education had not been specifically addressed before by any subject, though the researcher understands this to be an always present consideration since heads of school understand that a boarding school education is a "boutique" product.

While subject six sees parental pressure for academics as dominant, this head of school recognized that the overarching demand for "more" is impacting schools and the educators employed there. According to subject six:

I think they go through stages of these things, I think there are times when they want all of it, you know, they sort of want the perfect teaching profile on demand. You don't know which part they are going to want next and neither really do they.

This lack of consistency on the part of parents and an overarching demand for quality makes addressing the desires of families on the part of triple-threat educators even more difficult.

Subject six sees some modifications to the triple-threat model occurring, yet does not see wholesale shifts in staffing as either practical or possible due to all the areas of school life that need to be attended to. First and foremost, adjuncting faculty roles is something subject six acknowledged as attractive, yet not something this head sees as a long-term solution to pressures. In the eyes of subject six:

I think it's the way some schools are looking at it but I think in practical terms it is a limited number of people you can—a limited number of programs that you can run that way, all right, so I don't see it as a big money saver, certainly not in boarding schools. So I know seems right out there but I don't think it's going to work terribly well on any large scale with residential schools.

Like others interviewed as part of Phase 2 of this study, subject six's response to questions regarding the impact of potential FLSA changes reveals that these changes are not something heads of schools generally see as being impactful. Subject six did respond with candor regarding why this may be the case:

Well I'd say a) it's not on the radar probably for both two reasons why we're right now frankly, I am trying to work on the clarity of definitions we're tackling instead that's based on accepting a non-extensive employment status because <redacted> a little bit I wouldn't say behind the wall but a little bit archaic in its practices for classifying faculty and staff as well as daytime employees.

As subject six's school utilizes the triple threat “almost always,” these changes would impact this school little unlike schools in this study who utilize the houseparent model.

### **Summary of Qualitative Data**

Phase 2 of this study comprised semi-structured interviews with six heads of elite American boarding schools. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then open-

coded via Atlas.Ti. Four themes emerged as being dominant parts of the discussion regarding the sustainability of the triple-threat model at elite American boarding schools. With each of the six interview subjects representing a range of schools from the sample pool of 28, responses gave a great deal of insight into the experiences heads of school have regarding the triple-threat phenomenon at their specific schools. Of the six schools, one does not follow the triple-threat model as standard practice, although utilizes it “some of the time.” The other five subjects utilize the model from “most of the time” to “always.” With this in mind, overall conclusions regarding the sustainability of the model are difficult to draw since each subject, while agreeing that the model is under pressure, sees and addressed these pressures in a way unique to the specific institution. As such, the sustainability of the model is not agreed upon.

### **Results and Interpretations**

When combining the quantitative and qualitative data collected in Phases 1 and 2 of this study, the results point to a disjointed and individualistic view on the sustainability of the triple-threat model. There was no statistical variation between the responses based on school size, location, endowment, or percentage of revenue from tuition. This leads the researcher to conclude that pressure to the model and responses to these pressures are present across the entire spectrum of schools in the sample pool based on the individual circumstances of each school.

Conflicting results emerged from the quantitative questionnaire regarding the acknowledgement of pressure on the model and dominant view that the model is sustainable. In addition, views regarding what pressures were the most significant were not uniform, as respondents indicated that a range of challenges were present. Most



common overall were parental pressure and a more limited hiring pool from which to recruit teachers. Additionally, all respondents except one indicated views regarding work/life balance as being a pressure on the triple-threat model.

Interview responses further illuminated a disconnect between views that the model is under pressure yet is somehow sustainable. Subjects' responses to the sustainability of the triple-threat model were generally positive, yet contained few details as to how this was to be achieved. Heads of schools that took part in interviews indicated that pressures being felt were highly dependent on the individual circumstances found in specific schools. Thus, responses to these pressures were designed to meet the needs of an individual school while remaining in line with the mission statement of that school. In short, individual needs dictated individual responses.

One item emerged as being impactful to the future of the triple threat in schools that either do not currently utilize the model or have begun to shift away from it. Proposed changes to FLSA could force schools using a houseparent model to shift to the triple threat due to the increased budget floor that defines exempt status and the fact that houseparents do not meet the duties test for exemption. Should FLSA changes go into effect as currently written, schools that employ houseparents may be unable to pay these workers enough to meet the exemption standard (proposed to rise to \$50,400.00), thus making it more fiscally practical to convert to a triple-threat model since teachers, by the nature of the duties test, are already exempt regardless of salary. Of note from both phases of this study is the lack of knowledge regarding these proposed changes that are scheduled to take effect in early 2017 at the very latest. Some of the lack of knowledge is understandable for schools that utilize the triple threat, as they will not feel much impact.

### **Summary**

Overall, the triple-threat model appears to be under pressure, with schools adjusting as needed to address these pressures and preserve the model. For the wealthiest of schools, moving away from the model may be possible due to the ability to hire more staff. Likewise, schools close to urban centers may have more ability to modify the model due to the presence of a population from which to draw additional workers who can find housing in the local community and therefore do not need to be housed on campus. Less endowed schools or schools in remote areas may well be forced to utilize the triple threat regardless of pressures and challenges within the hiring pool.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the usage and sustainability of the triple-threat staffing model found in elite American boarding schools. While a long-standing model among elite boarding schools, the model has come under pressure in recent years due to both internal and external challenges. As a result of these challenges, the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model is being challenged. By focusing on the use of the model and how heads of elite schools view its future, the researcher conducted an explanatory sequential mixed method study based on grounded theory. There were two phases to this study that attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How are elite American boarding schools currently utilizing the triple-threat model?
2. What kind of pressures exists in hiring for the triple-threat teacher and are these pressures forcing a shift away from the model?
3. How are schools addressing possible pressures on the triple-threat model via staffing modifications and creativity in modifying hiring practices?
4. What is the future of the triple-threat model?

In the first phase of the study, heads of 28 elite schools were sent a survey questionnaire via a secure email using Qualtrics. Survey results were analyzed by using ordinal data generated by a Somers' D test using SPSS. Response results allowed for the generation of an overarching picture of both the use of and pressures on the triple-threat model as seen by heads of elite schools. This data formed the basis for the semi-

structured interviews found in the second phase of this study. Heads of elite schools that responded to the survey were invited to participate in Phase 2 of the study.

The second phase of the study consisted of interviews with six heads of elite schools conducted by phone or Zoom platform. Heads were asked four open-ended questions about their experience with the triple-threat model as a phenomenon. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed by Landmark Transcription Services. Transcripts were open coded using Atlas.Ti software, with four themes emerging as significant indicators as to the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model.

When combining Phases 1 and 2 of this study, a clear picture emerged as to the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model in elite American boarding schools as well as numerous reasons heads of schools are experiencing the model as they do. While consensus emerged that the model is still widely used yet under pressure, both quantitative and qualitative data illuminated dispirited responses to the sustainability of the model. In addition, ample room for further research was identified based on the focused size of the sample and the responses given.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the data collected in Phases 1 and 2 of this study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model in elite American boarding schools. With the exception of two all-girls schools, the triple-threat model continues to be the dominant staffing model within elite American boarding schools. While this general statement is true, it was clear from the data that the reality of every faculty member being a triple-threat is not present. Nearly every school in the sample pool utilizes the triple-threat, or aspects of the triple-threat, as needed to fit the

mission, location, culture, and financial needs of the individual school. Girls schools, while not employing the triple-threat exclusively, do use faculty in multiple roles ranging from classroom, to athletics, to the arts, to dorm coverage during study hall and weekends. While house mothers play a large role at these schools, they are supported by faculty members in a triple-threat-like capacity even if those faculty members are not seen as triple threats.

Some schools adhere to the triple-threat model more closely than others. Reasons for this, as described in Phase 2 of this study, range from the desire to hire adjunct teachers or coaches to meet the needs of a particular program to a heavy reliance on the model because of the school being located in a rural area with little population from which to draw adjuncts and few housing options for off-campus faculty. In each case, the individual needs of schools dictate their reliance on and use of the model.

Schools with greater wealth can better afford to expand programs and hire more employees since they can take on additional financial expenditures, thus reducing the triple-threat burden across the faculty. Additionally, these wealthier schools can reduce duties on current faculty via hiring more employees or by incentivizing current employees by paying stipends to encourage faculty members to remain triple threats. Schools in the sample pool with smaller endowments, keeping in mind all the schools in this sample, are considered financially “elite,” must better utilize current employees to keep costs down, and may be limited in their ability to offer new or expanded programs because of these restraints on hiring.

The location of a school can have an impact on the school’s use of the triple-threat model as the data suggest. While not always the sole factor, geography does play a

role. As stated above, rural schools have fewer options for hiring adjuncts from the local population. With fewer potential employees available locally, schools in more rural areas tend to seek triple-threat educators as a result of local demographics. Further impacting the rural school is the issue of housing. A key factor in the hiring matrix at elite boarding schools is the availability of local or on-campus housing. Rural schools have fewer off-campus housing options for adjunct teachers and coaches and thus need to house a greater percentage of faculty members in on-campus housing. In having to provide housing, it is logical for these schools to maximize the contributions of employees by utilizing the triple-threat model.

With this in mind, schools that choose to move away from or modify the model tend to do so because they can, not because they have to. To clarify, schools that have the ability to shift the model, do so with purposeful intent and with a clear reasoning for doing so. With only two schools not using a strict interpretation of the model and only one shifting away intentionally, the triple-threat continues to be the standard in elite American boarding schools.

Made clear in the data from both phases of this study, the triple-threat model is under pressure. While it appears the model has always been a challenge to hire for, recent shifts in expectations on the part of parents and changes in the way employees view work have reduced the hiring pool of triple-threat candidates. Multiple factors contribute to this reality, although three emerged as being dominant.

Parental expectations for teachers with a high level of content area expertise mean fewer candidates meet the profile that many schools are being pressured into adopting. Again, some schools are feeling this more than others based on the mission statements of

the school. In any case, justification for the premium cost of an elite school education does require a premium academic background. If schools are to meet the demands of parents in this regard, recruiting and retaining content area experts becomes both more challenging, and important.

Pressure for expert level coaches appears to be a general pressure on the model, with little evidence of schools not feeling it in at least some capacity. Given the rise of AAU athletics within the United States and the focus parents have with regard to their child gaining a college scholarship or, at least, a leg up in the admissions process, the expectation that varsity level coaches will have high-level playing and coaching backgrounds is understandable.

As with parental pressure for high-level content expertise, the premium cost of an elite boarding school education yields the expectation that coaches will be of the highest quality. In some schools, this means hiring adjunct coaches who take on roles in admissions or college counseling but do not teach or perform residential duties. If a school chooses to have a competitive athletic program, or, more realistically, a single high-caliber team, the need for expert coaches is clear. This, when combined with academic pressures, makes it a true challenge to find these two competencies in one candidate and is thus putting pressure on a model predicated on hiring “well-rounded” educators at a level that may be less than expert.

A surprising finding that emerged from this study is the lack of parental pressure for focused residential life curriculum. While heads of girls schools who utilize house mothers see the residential life realm as an important part of their model, the data gathered from the first phase of this study clearly shows this lack of parental pressure.

While understood that elite boarding schools must provide residential oversight and, in most schools, the office of residential life is an integral part of the school, parents do not appear to view this facet of the triple threat as being as important as athletics or academics. As indicated in Phase 2, the residential life component, while demanding from an hours worked perspective, is seen as an “add on” at many elite boarding schools where having an “adult presence” is seen as sufficient in the dorms.

Shifts in views regarding work/life balance and the role of work overall in a person’s life are clearly putting pressure on the model. As seen in both phases of this study, and painted vividly in interviews, the willingness of employees, both young and old, to commit to the “total institution” is less than in the past. While it may be that this pressure is found more among Millennials, as would be consistent with general research regarding Millennial attitudes, the data suggest that today’s triple-threat employees are less willing to give the time and energy to their job than in the past. Some of this shift may be a result of a societal change in views regarding work. Several heads of schools made note that people want greater interaction and stimulus outside their job. This is a challenge for schools to manage due to the number of hours worked per week by triple-threat educators and the realities of life in a total institution. In many ways, life as a triple-threat educator mimics life in the military, as there is little to no separation between personal and professional realms.

Some of the change to the way employees and heads view the triple threat may be explained by the increased pressure on triple-threat educators to perform at a high level in multiple areas. In either case, the reality of working as a triple-threat educator is all encompassing and any change to the view that the model is a career worth embracing or



that the demands on triple-threat educators are realistic will lead to a smaller hiring pool and less stable faculty culture.

Present throughout the qualitative phase of this study, the idea of faculty and school culture is impactful on the triple-threat model. Schools where the culture of the triple-threat model is deeply tied to the mission statement embrace the overarching theme that the triple-threat model is one of value with regard to best serving student populations. This is derived from the view that triple-threat educators model the personal attributes and habits that schools wish to impart to the students who attend elite American boarding schools. This picture of the triple-threat educator as an example of the scholar/citizen/athlete/artist that the traditional liberal arts hold in esteem is one that many elite boarding schools continue to embrace, yet one that is becoming more challenging to attract to becoming a triple-threat educator while at the same time running headlong into changing parental expectations. Seeing each area of the triple threat as a professional role is something many schools continue to struggle with, as historically, the athletic and residential duties had been tertiary to academics. This has changed recently with regard to athletics.

The challenge is finding potential employees that meet the multi-faceted skillsets of the triple threat while addressing the pressure for high-level expertise in sport or academics. In short, the goals of schools with regard to employing triple-threat educators and the demands of parents for experts are at odds. From the standpoint of school culture, this presents a challenge. How does a school staff itself with the triple-threat educators it needs to perform all of the duties required to fulfill the mission of the school in a financially sustainable manner while satisfying parental pressures? Some schools, as

demonstrated in this study, have started to address these antithetical goals by shifting the school's culture away from the triple threat, or, in some cases, cutting back on some area of triple-threat responsibilities. In either scenario, school culture will be impacted and school leaders must be sensitive to this shifting dynamic.

While not initially seen as something that may impact the sustainability of the triple-threat model, proposed changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act may indeed serve to reinforce the use of the model. Of great significance is the fact that few heads of elite schools are aware of the potential changes to this law. A clear date for the release of the final rules has not been given, which may be used by the current administration as a tool in the upcoming election. With this in mind, any implementation of proposed changes would not be until late 2016 or early 2017.

The changes put forth by the Labor Department call for an increase in the wage floor defining the level at which employees are exempt from overtime pay. Currently set at \$24,500 per year, the proposed increase would raise the threshold for the "salary test" to \$50,400 per year. Significant in this change is that schools utilizing the houseparent model, where the primary duty is overseeing the residential life, would be forced to modify their staffing model. This would impact the girls' schools in this study since house mothers do not meet the duties test for exemption as teachers do. Additionally, while they may currently be exempt due to the FLSA salary floor, under the proposed changes, they would no longer be exempt. This change could push schools that use the houseparent model to move towards the triple threat due to the duties exemption of teachers.

Of great significance based on both phases of this study is the lack of knowledge regarding these changes by heads of elite schools. While most elite schools have human resource departments that handle compliance issues, since employment contracts are issues by the head of school, it would seem logical that heads of school would be informed about legal changes that may impact the staffing model at their school. While some schools will not be impacted at all by any changes to FLSA, others will be impacted somewhat if they use admissions office associates or development office associates as dorm parents or coaches, since these employees would not meet the duties test for exemption and would most certainly not meet the salary standard for exemption under the proposed changes.

Unlike the agreement found regarding the presence of pressure on the triple-threat model, the future of the model is less clear, yet heads of elite schools continue to see the model as sustainable. This seemingly antithetical view, that the model is both under pressure but sustainable, speaks to the independent nature of elite boarding schools. While it may appear that heads of schools are failing to realize that the model may not be sustainable, this may actually not be the case. Since schools operate independently of each other, with each school governed by an independent board of trustees and guided by a mission statement, the way each school addresses pressures on the triple threat is unique to that particular school. As well, the location and finances of the school impact how the school uses the triple-threat model and how it may address changes in the way the model is evolving.

This explains the overarching belief that the model is under pressure, but that it is going to continue for the foreseeable future. Some of this sustainability may exist simply

out of necessity, as it would be impossible for any school to hire the number of people needed to replace the triple-threat teacher. This is true of even the schools with the largest endowments, as it would potentially double or triple the number of employees at a school; something that is financially impossible for any school to undertake.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results and interpretations of the data from Phases 1 and 2 of this study, the following recommendations should be undertaken as possible ways to address the pressures on and the overall stability of the triple-threat model. These recommendations are based on the analysis of the data and the formation of a theory grounded in that data that the triple threat is under pressure yet will remain the dominant staffing model at elite American boarding schools. Additionally, it may be that potential changes to FLSA standards may reinforce the use of the triple-threat model.

### **Parental Pressures**

While elite schools ultimately decide how best to address the demands and expectations parents have, the reality is that schools are offering a premium product and need to be aware of the relationship this has with regard to parental pressure. Being aware does not mean addressing each and every demand of a parent but understanding the relationship between the expectations parents may have and the mission of the school. Likewise, it is recommended that heads of schools use a strategic long-term view when deciding on programs in terms of how they will serve the school both now and in the years to come and not making numerous short-term changes simply to meet the demands of parents, something as noted in the data that can be unclear and constantly changing.

With regard to hiring, the researcher suggests bringing in new faculty who are mission appropriate and who can serve the school in multiple facets of the triple threat and not in specialized roles as some parents demand. While some schools may shift away from the model, it is clear from the data collected that the model is one that supports the inclusive nature of a 24/7 boarding community and is both cost effective and demonstrates the best modeling for young people via adults being seen in multiple roles on campus. The researcher recommends bolstering the attention paid to the value of this model and doing so in a way that is clearly identifiable to parents via school communications and marketing.

### **Work/Life Balance**

Seen in both quantitative and qualitative results, how heads of schools approach shifting views regarding work/life balance is of great significance with regard to the sustainability of the triple-threat model. The researcher recommends that heads of schools perform yearly internal audits to determine the workload of faculty members and adjust these workloads as needed to better support work/life balance at schools. This must be done in tandem with assessing the needs of the school so as to create a balance that allows duties to be carried out to meet the mission of individual schools while acknowledging the needs of faculty members to create a healthy and productive environment.

Regardless of the age of faculty members, given the increased demands on teachers of all kind from great parental pressure to the “always connected” nature of the modern world, heads of schools are advised to utilize the yearly internal audits to gain a better understanding of what duty assignments would best suit each faculty member’s

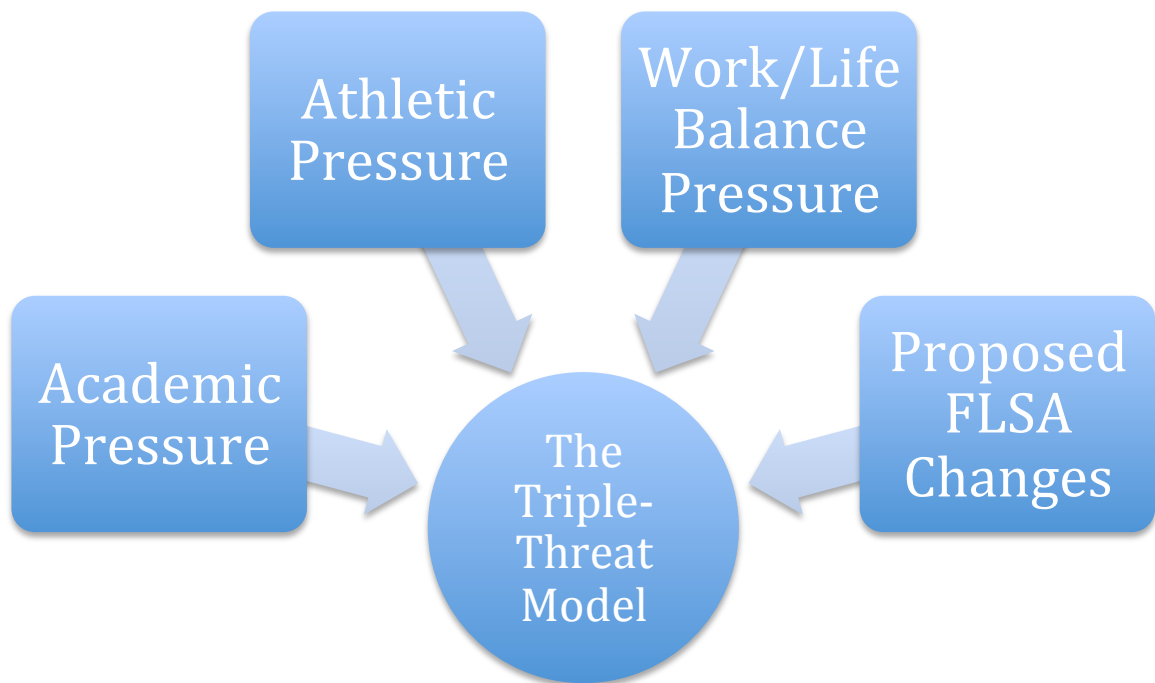
strengths and weaknesses as well as their individual circumstances. This could mean alleviating some element of duty for a faculty member who is a new parent or being attentive to the workload of a brand new teacher. Additionally, veteran teachers could be assigned duties outside the dorm that could take advantage of their experience while rewarding them for years of service. Again, as stated above, individual heads will address these issues as it best fits their institutions.

### **FLSA Impact**

While the final ruling on the proposed FLSA changes has not been released as of March 2016, statements from the Labor Department indicate that the rise in the salary test floor will be significant even if not reaching the \$50,400 mark called for in the original proposal. All those people would be classified as non-exempt should FLSA changes go through. Heads of schools who use the houseparent model, or use admissions or development associates as coaches and dorm parent, are strongly advised to work with their human resources office and legal counsel to assess the impact these changes may have and to ensure FLSA compliance. Some schools, those that use houseparents, will be greatly impacted. Others who use the triple threat will be less so due to the “exempt” status of teachers based on the duties test.

It may be the case that once individual schools review it, they may be well advised to move towards greater utilization of the triple-threat model since it is cost effective and in compliance with the FLSA standards. For two schools in this study, this would mean a full shift away from houseparents, something that will be a great challenge given the culture of those schools and the way it would impact their ability to remain mission driven. It seems unlikely in the researcher’s view that any school utilizing the

houseparent model would be able to afford continuing that practice while being in compliance with FLSA standards. As a result, growth in the use of the triple threat is a possible consequence.



*Figure 3. Impacts on the triple threat.*

### **Impacts on Leadership**

The specific role of the head at elite boarding schools differs greatly from institution to institution. However, each head must work to achieve a balance within their respective community with regard to the staffing model and manner in which they lead. Viewing the boarding school model via a Systems Thinking approach (Senge, 1994) will allow heads of school to decompartmentalize the different facets of the triple-threat model. In doing so, heads will be able to see the interconnected nature of the model and

how those connections can be both positive and a challenge to the overall function of the system. In this sense, heads of school can utilize a triple-threat model that allows for the best attributes of each individual educator to be maximized, while at the same time not placing people in positions in which they may struggle, burn out, or be unhappy.

To accomplish this, heads should “get up on the balcony” (Heifetz, Linsky, & Grashow, 2009) regularly to see the manner in which the system functions. This is a challenging leadership stance, since heads often have highly focused sets of goals mandated by the board of trustees. Even so, by maintaining a good overarching vision of the community and the roles the triple-threat educator plays, heads can lead with vision. This entails understanding the life of the triple-threat educator and keeping in mind the pressures on the model and how these pressures are felt by those tasked with producing quality outcomes in the classroom, on the field, and in the community as a whole.

Unique to the “total institution” (Goffman, 1956), heads of school must lead in a manner that accounts for the complexities present within a boarding school community and the possible conflicts that will arise. Changes in staffing models, hiring of adjuncts, reducing or increasing workloads for certain faculty members, and remaining in tune with work/life balance, heads will often be called upon to “cook the conflict” within their community. This is especially true in elite boarding school communities where the pressures on the triple-threat model are being felt most. By managing the triple-threat educator’s opinions and views regarding the model, heads will be able to facilitate a positive and functioning community. If change is needed, for example, reducing the pressures on the model, stakeholder buy-in from the triple-threat educator will be essential. Heads leading schools that continue to embrace and utilize the triple threat



need to do so from a democratic position and not be seen as authoritarian, thus jeopardizing the community in which the triple threat exists.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

With this study focused on the use and sustainability of the triple-threat model at 28 elite schools, there are two further sample pools on which to re-run this study. First, with total membership approximately 238 (including the 28 schools present in this study), The Association of Boarding Schools community offers 210 additional boarding schools that could add to the data generated by this study. These schools vary in size, academic rigor, mission, and wealth and, thus, how the triple-threat model is used at these schools, and any pressures on the model seen in them may differ from the sample pool used in this study. By studying these other schools, a broader picture of the model, both its use and sustainability, can be generated. In turn, this information could be used to serve the TABS community as a benchmark for staffing and opening a general conversation regarding the triple-threat model, its benefits, and its drawbacks. Once this broader study is complete, data can be shared, thus giving heads of all TABS-member schools access to information regarding how other member schools are experiencing the model.

While not triple threats, independent day schools often use a “double-threat” model of teacher/coach or activity leader, and thus face many of the same challenges triple-threat schools do with regard to parental pressures, housing in the local community, changes regarding work/life balance, and FLSA compliance under the proposed new requirements. These schools, most being members of the NAIS, could then see how their staffing model is being impacted based on the pressures identified in this study and make adjustments as needed.

### Summary

Longstanding as a staffing model in elite American boarding schools, the triple threat has been called into question in recent years due to external and internal pressures on the model. Parental expectations for experts in the classroom and on the field make hiring more challenging for heads of school, as finding a prospective teacher who has the desired expertise in both areas is a lofty goal. Additionally, changes in how employees view work/life balance make staffing a “total institution” a greater challenge than in the past due to new, or even veteran, faculty members desiring a life outside of the school community. With these challenges in mind, the triple threat continues to be the most widely used staffing model in elite American boarding schools.

While no two are exactly the same, mission statements at elite schools, along with the programs that enact these missions, are only viable when utilizing the triple-threat model. Additionally, the financial reality of staffing three distinct areas of school life with one faculty member is both logical and financially sustainable given the value each faculty member brings to the school. Tripling the number of staff, even at the most financially well-endowed schools, is not possible.

Although agreement was found regarding the pressure on the triple-threat model, heads of schools that use the triple threat were fairly uniform in their belief that the model will continue to be used. As one head put it, “while people think the model might not be sustainable (from the perspective of finding candidates who like it), they acknowledge they intend to keep using it, so I think they are admitting that stepping away from the model will be hard – as well as philosophically undesirable” (P. Quinn, personal communication, December 20, 2015).

A possible explanation for the resilience of the model may be that it has always been a challenging model to staff for and what is currently being felt with regard to pressure is simply continuity in that sense. While the roles have become more expansive and complex, the triple-threat educator has always needed to possess multiple skillsets, thus making them somewhat of a rarity. As stated by one researcher, “When Caroline and I conducted our research in the 1980s, there was already discussion among teachers and heads about the long-term viability of the triple threat teacher” (P. Cookson, personal communication, November 29, 2014). In viewing the triple-threat model this way, it may simply be that the pressure is in line with the status quo.

Unforeseen at the start of this study was the potential impact of proposed FLSA changes on the triple-threat model. These changes, regardless of how little or greatly they may impact a particular school, make the triple-threat an even more value-laden model. For schools currently not using the model, or using a hybrid, proposed FLSA changes may see the model grow out of financial necessity.

While the pressures on the triple-threat model are real, and staffing for the model is more challenging than in years past, the researcher theorizes that the triple threat will continue to be the dominant staffing model in elite American boarding schools for the foreseeable future. Tied deeply to mission statements and financial constraints, the triple-threat model offers the only staffing option at boarding schools, both elite and not. With this in mind, schools will continue to struggle with the pressures on the model, but with no viable alternative, the triple-threat educator will continue to: Teach, Coach, Live.

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**Appendix: Survey Instrument**

1) The number of students at my school is:

Less than 300 students

300-500 students

501-750 students

more than 750 students

2) My school is:

Coed

Single-Sex

3) My school is located in the following type of area:

Rural

Urban

Suburban

4) My school is located in which region:

Northeast

Mid-Atlantic

West Coast

Southeast

5) My school has an endowment of approximately \_\_\_\_\_ dollars per student:

Less than \$250k

More than \$500k

More than \$1 million

More than \$2 million

6) What percentage of your school's revenue is generated by tuition?

90+

75%-89%

60%-74%

Under 60%

7) My school utilizes the triple-threat (teach/coach/dorm duty) model of teacher.

All of the Time

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

8) The triple-threat model represents an ideal balance in the type of teachers our school needs.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

9) The triple-threat is under pressure with regard to sustainability of the model.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

10) The triple-threat model is most suitable when hiring younger faculty.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

11) The triple-threat model can lead to burnout and/or attrition among promising young teachers.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

12) Parental pressure and expectations for experts in academic fields (hiring of those with advanced degrees) is a challenge to hiring triple-threat faculty members.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

13) Changes in expectations regarding work/life balance by prospective candidates are impacting hiring triple-threat faculty.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

14) Hyper-specialization in sports by recent college graduates is making it more difficult to hire triple-threat teachers who can coach multiple sports.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

15) Parental expectations for focused residential life curriculum is impacting hiring triple-threat faculty members.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

16) Parental expectations regarding expert level (College or professional playing experience) coaches are impacting hiring triple-threat faculty members.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

17) Geographic location (rural, urban, suburban) influences the need to employ the triple-threat model.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

18) Limits in institutional financial resources make the triple-threat a necessity.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

19) The recent changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act reinforce use of the triple-threat model.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

20) The triple-threat model is deeply tied to my school's mission statement.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

21) My school will continue utilizing the triple-threat model for the foreseeable future.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

22) My school has begun to shift away from the triple-threat model.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

23) I believe the triple-threat model is a sustainable model.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

24) Our commitment to faculty diversity is impacting the hiring of triple-threat faculty.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Agree

Strongly Agree

25) I have to educate potential hires on what it means to be a triple-threat faculty member.

Most of the Time

Sometimes

Rarely

Never